

Ohio House Ways and Means Committee  
HB 186 Proponent Testimony  
Elizabeth Knighton  
Submitted on: September 23, 2023

Chair Roemer, Vice Chair Lorenz, Ranking Member Troy and members of the committee: my name is Elizabeth Knighton and I am a resident of Franklin County. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of House Bill 186.

Last weekend at Westerville's Fourth Friday, a recurring summer street festival, I chatted with a woman who it turned out is a pediatric orthopedist at Nationwide Children's Hospital here in Columbus. She said every time she is on the inpatient floor she encounters patients – children – who are there because of gun shot wounds. It is gut wrenching for her and should be for us as well, to know that per the CDC, guns are the leading cause of death for children age 1-19 in our country.

Children are at particular risk for unintentional shootings. This year alone the state of Ohio is tied for second place in the nation for highest number of unintentional shootings by children. We have had 22 in Ohio this year, behind only Texas's 26. As a mother of three young children, one of whom is here with me today to see our government at work, unintentional shootings by children is not an area in which I'd like our state to stand out. As Ohio lawmakers you are in an exciting position to work to reduce the numbers of those tragedies here in our state.

Data show that secure storage lessens the likelihood of unintentional shootings by children. (In a Nationwide Children's Study released earlier this year of unintentional shootings by children under 15 years of age, 92% of the shootings included firearms which had been kept loaded and unlocked. Secure storage saves lives.) And that's to say nothing of the reduction in stolen guns and the reduction in suicides that also come from securing firearms, which I could have chosen to talk about instead!

House Bill 186 asks for a sales tax exemption on firearm safety devices, creating an incentive for our citizens to keep their firearms secured and out of the wrong hands. Please support House Bill 186 to increase safety for our children and our communities in Ohio.

Thank you, and I'm glad to answer any questions the committee members may have.