

Testimony on House Bill 186
Ways and Means Committee
September 26, 2023
Submitted by:
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Chair Roemer, Vice Chair Lorenz, Ranking Member Troy and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify in support of House Bill 186, a bill that will exempt sales of firearm safety devices from sales and use tax. My name is Michelle Lee Heym and I have lived in Powell, Ohio since August 2015, with my 3 girls and husband, after moving here from West Simsbury, Connecticut. If we can save lives with this common sense gun legislation, let's do it!

I moved to Ohio 3 years after a horrific tragedy took place in Newtown, CT where 20 children, 6 educators, and a mother were murdered and a shooter took his life at Sandy Hook Elementary school. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2013/03/28/175570085/arsenal-found-at-newtown-shooters-home-read-the-police-reports> My young children and niece were on lockdown and it was terrifying. My life will never be the same.

Although the shooter at Sandy Hook had severe mental health issues and Asperger's, that's 28 people who might be alive today if firearms had been securely stored by the parents and that 20 year old did not have access to those firearms. Whether it's a mass shooting, a suicide, an unintentional shooting, or a homicide, we must collectively do something as society to encourage people to safely secure their firearms. HB186 is something that will encourage people to do this, and maybe something we can all agree on that makes sense.

I've included an article which details the arsenal located at the 20 year old perpetrator's house in Newtown. All guns used in this mass shooting were purchased and owned by the mother, as they enjoyed hunting and target shooting. There was a safe in the home but it was found after the tragedy unlocked.

Firearm suicide is having a devastating impact on youth in America, but there is hope. We know that removing access to firearms is the easiest and quickest intervention to reduce risk. This bill will give a tax free incentive for families to purchase a safety device. I work as a substitute teacher for primarily Olentangy Local School schools and was saddened to learn of a suicide more than once of students I taught. Those guns were easily accessible to those high school students and they should NOT have been, and would not have been if the families had properly locked their firearms. Learn more from @everytownresearch how we can prevent these tragedies.

<https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-rise-of-firearm-suicide-among-young-americans/>

Veterans face unique challenges during their service and when they come home. And because they are more likely to own firearms, veterans also are facing a suicide crisis. Firearm suicide is a significant public health crisis in the United States, claiming the lives of nearly 24,000

Americans every year, about 65 deaths a day, an average of 4500 veterans die by suicide every year. The problem is not getting better and we owe it to our veterans to take action just as they took action to protect us by enlisting in the military. Addressing the role of guns and safely securing firearms is integral to ending veteran suicide.

<https://everytownresearch.org/report/those-who-serve-addressing-firearm-suicide-among-military-veterans/>

Unintentional shootings are not an accident. Gun owners can make their homes and communities safer by storing their guns securely. We are all safer when guns are stored unloaded, locked, and separate from ammunition. One study found that households that locked both firearms and ammunition were associated with a 78 percent lower risk of self-inflicted firearm injuries and an 85% lower risk of unintentional firearm injuries among children and teens, compared to those that locked neither. Another study estimated that if half of households with children that have at least one unlocked gun switched to locking all their guns, one third of youth gun suicides and unintentional deaths could be prevented, saving an estimated 251 lives in a single year. This is data to show that secure storage lessens the likelihood of unintentional shootings by children. I have included a link to that data here:

<https://everytownresearch.org/report/notanaccident/#impact-of-gun-storage-policies>

There are an estimated 393 million civilian-owned firearms in the United States, and more than one-third of homes contain at least one gun. Over 4.5 million children in the US live in a home with at least one unlocked and loaded firearm. Let's work together, practice responsible gun ownership and pass this bill today to provide a tax exemption for firearm safety devices.

Cost of firearm safety devices

So let's take a look at the cost of some of these firearm safety devices. Gun owner's can make their homes and communities safer by storing their guns securely. That means storing them unloaded, locked, and separate from ammunition. If these safety devices were exempt from tax, perhaps more people would be able to afford these locks and be more encouraged to lock their firearms..

“Secure gun storage solutions are not “one-size fits all.” One type of storage that may work for one gun owner may not work for another. The best kind of gun storage is the type (or types) that you will use consistently and that will allow you to secure all firearms in your home and vehicles, no matter whether they are stored together or separately. Here are some options to consider.

If you're looking for

Storage that can fit multiple guns in one place



Full-Size Gun Safe

Biometric lock more secure than key or passcode.

\$200–\$2,000

Prevents access by children

Prevents access by unauthorized users

Prevents theft (if secured to a structure in home)
Enables fast access

Storage that is on the smaller and
lighter side



Lock Box / Locker

Biometric lock more secure than key or passcode.

\$25–\$350

Prevents access by children

Prevents access by unauthorized users

Provides secure vehicle storage

Enables fast access

Storage in a vehicle



Console / Vehicle Gun Safe

Biometric lock more secure than key or passcode.

\$50–\$350

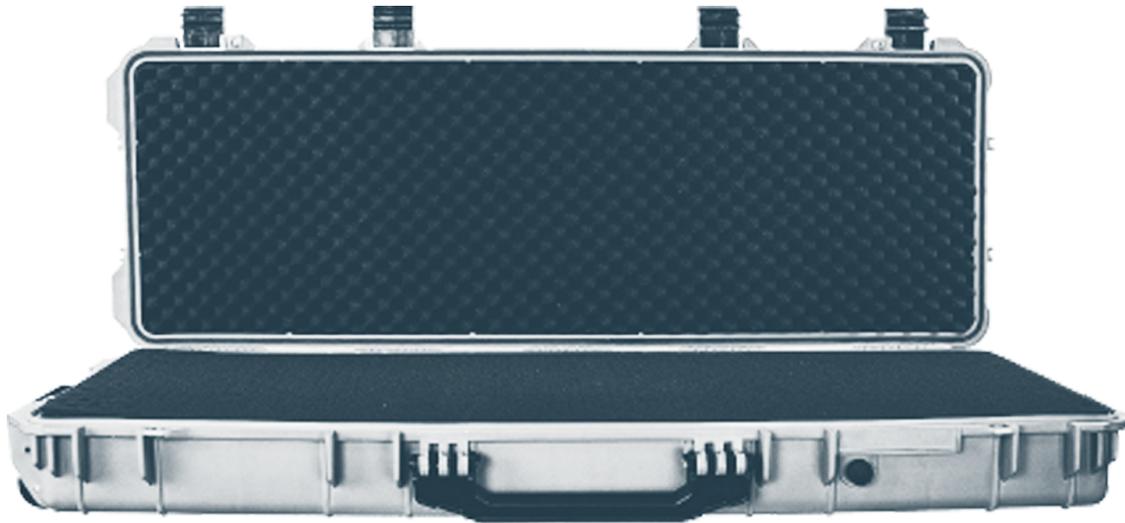
Prevents access by children
Prevents access by unauthorized users

Prevents theft (if secured to a structure in car)

Provides secure vehicle storage

Enables fast access

Storage, home or in-transit gun, of one firearm



Gun Case

Uses external lock.

\$10–\$150

Prevents access by children

Prevents access by unauthorized users

Enables fast access

Storage that prevents a single weapon
from firing



Cable Lock

Cable runs through action of single weapon to prevent firing. Ammunition must be removed for lock use.

May be dismantled with minimal tools and skills, so not as effective with older children and teens.

\$0*-\$50

Prevents use by small children
Enables fast access

*Often provided free with firearm purchase.

**Storage that locks the trigger of a
single weapon**



Trigger Lock

Never use with loaded gun.

May be dismantled with minimal tools and skills, so not as effective with older children and teens.

\$10–\$75

Prevents use by small children
Enables fast access

Explore Secure Storage







The Be SMART campaign was launched to raise awareness that secure gun storage—storing guns locked, unloaded and separate from ammunition—can save children’s lives. Be SMART emphasizes that it’s an adult responsibility to keep kids from accessing guns, and that every adult can play a role in keeping kids and communities safer.

There are thousands of Be SMART volunteers in your communities and neighborhoods that are delivering the Be SMART message across the country in all 50 states.

Connect with our community

Contact us

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Legal

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ng your firearm

Gun owners can make their homes and communities safer by storing their guns securely. This means storing them unloaded, locked, and separate from ammunition.

Research shows secure storage practices play a vital role in reducing the risk of gun violence. Storing firearms securely protects children and adults by preventing unintentional shootings, gun suicides, and gun theft.

HOW IT WORKS

Secure storage prevents shootings by disrupting unauthorized access to firearms.