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**House Public Safety Committee  
Substitute Senate Bill 273 – Sponsor Testimony  
Tuesday, February 17th, 2026**

Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the House Public Safety Committee, thank you for allowing me to present Substitute Senate Bill 273 for your consideration and discussion today.

Senate Bill 273 was brought to me by Federal Firearm Licensees (FFLs), the Buckeye Firearms Association and Life Side Ohio, which is a Pro-2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment group that is working to help veterans and those in law enforcement deal with mental health issues that could lead to suicide. I would like to share some important facts from 2022 concerning the prevalence of suicide by veterans reported in the 2024 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report<sup>1</sup>:

- 6,407 veterans died by suicide, compared to 41,484 suicides among non-veteran adults
- On average, there were 131.2 suicides per day with 17.6 being veterans
- Veterans, who make up about 6% of the U.S. adult population, account for approximately 13.4% of all suicides
- Among adults who died by suicide, firearms are more commonly involved among Veteran deaths (73.5%) than non-Veteran deaths (52.2%)
- Suicide was the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death for Veterans under 45 years old

This legislation is crucial for our first responders and veterans who have quick access to firearms and face stigma with admission to a mental health crisis. Law

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2024/2024-Annual-Report-Part-2-of-2\\_508.pdf](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2024/2024-Annual-Report-Part-2-of-2_508.pdf)

enforcement officers are at an increased risk of suicide compared to civilians. Risk factors such as traumatic encounters, stress, and exposure to firearms increase the likelihood for first responders to attempt suicide.

Senate Bill 273 simply creates the ability for FFLs and law enforcement agencies to voluntarily store firearms for gun owners struggling with emotional or mental health issues. These partnerships are voluntary, and no one would be obligated to participate.

While the genesis of this idea is to help veterans and those in law enforcement who might deal with thoughts of suicide, it would be open to all Ohioans. Hunters, collectors, firearms instructors, former military, and first responders would have the ability to turn over their firearms without losing ownership and their 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment rights.

Having this ability to store firearms will help prevent suicide by allowing gun owners to seek help and protect themselves against rash decisions with firearms nearby. Safe gun storage is crucial to preventing suicide in all our districts and this would provide an accessible option that negates stigma gun owners face when dealing with mental health issues.

Before passing this bill out of the Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs, and Public Safety committee, we adopted a substitute bill that no longer requires input from the Attorney General's office and focuses on existing Federal regulations for storage. By doing so, we relieve administrative burden and make the process easier for gun owners and those who offer storage. Additionally, we added a clause that makes any paperwork between the gun owner and storage provider confidential and not subject to any public record request.

I would be remiss if I did not note that this bill had five hearings in the Ohio Senate. It had 17 proponents testifying from all sides of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment. It is supported by the National Rifle Association, the Buckeye Firearms Association, the Black Wing Shooting Center, as well as suicide prevention groups like Life Side Ohio. It had no opponents and came out of committee on a 5-0 vote. The vote on the Senate floor was 33-0, where it picked up 20 co-sponsors from both my Republican and Democrat Colleagues.

Madam Chair and members of this committee, I ask you to consider proponent testimony for Senate Bill 273 so that we can learn more from the stakeholders like Buckeye Firearms and Life Side Ohio. Thank you for allowing me to testify and I will gladly answer any questions.