

Personal Testimony in Support of Ohio SB 273
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Chairwoman Abrams, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the House Public Safety Committee,

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 273. If passed, this legislation will increase access to voluntary firearm storage in Ohio by addressing civil liability concerns expressed by licensed firearms dealers and by strengthening trust and clarity for gun owners who choose to utilize this option. When voluntary options that respect rights are available, lives are saved.

My name is Sarah Joy Albrecht. While I am offering personal testimony for educational purposes, my background includes serving as a firearms Range Safety Officer, a QPR Suicide Prevention Instructor, a retired Doula and Childbirth Educator specializing in supporting at-risk clients, and as the Founder of Hold My Guns®, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit within the firearms community that partners with licensed firearms retailers to offer voluntary, off-site firearm storage.

I founded Hold My Guns in 2018 after my family lost an eighteen-year-old friend to suicide by firearm. During that time of grief, as a mother of five children affected by the loss of their friend, I searched for solutions that supported gun owners when a member of their household was experiencing a personal crisis. I learned that while many mental health professionals recommend distance from lethal means in times of crisis, there are often legal and practical barriers for gun owners seeking to implement that recommendation.

Recognizing this gap, I saw the opportunity for Federal Firearms Licensees (FFLS), an existing and trusted community resource, to utilize their infrastructure to offer voluntary storage. At the time, however, there was no clearly defined process for FFLs to provide this service to their customers.

In the fall of 2018, I met with firearms law attorney Joshua Prince. He raised these concerns with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and a lawful framework for FFL storage was clarified and shared with the Hold My Guns team.

Hold My Guns became an official 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 2020 and began offering voluntary firearm storage through referrals to its FFL partners.

In 2025, Hold My Guns expanded to nine partner locations across eight states. To date, its FFL partners have stored more than 450 firearms. Each firearm stored represents a voluntary

decision by a lawful gun owner to prevent unauthorized access through secure, out-of-home storage.

In addition, Hold My Guns has created awareness of voluntary firearm storage through national outreach efforts, distributed more than 12,000 personal safety plans that include a voluntary plan for the storage of lethal means, and educated over 300 members of the firearms community in QPR suicide prevention.

Hold My Guns' FFL partners respect the privacy of their customers and do not ask why firearms are being stored. Nevertheless, gun owners have voluntarily shared a wide range of reasons for utilizing this service. While the prevention of suicide by firearm was part of Hold My Guns' origin story, it is not the only reason firearm owners choose temporary storage.

Common circumstances include travel, military deployment, home sale, flood or fire restoration, college housing transitions, estate administration, medical treatment, mental health care, divorce or custody transitions, dementia care within the home, the presence of a foster child in the home, and temporary housing situations such as stays in veterans shelters or domestic violence shelters. In many of these situations, voluntary off-site storage helps prevent unauthorized access, reduces the risk of firearm theft, and decreases the likelihood that stolen firearms could later be used in criminal activity.

Voluntary storage affirms the personal agency of lawful gun owners who want a private, out-of-home solution that prevents unauthorized access to their firearms while respecting their rights and dignity. This option does not conflict with the principles recognized in *District of Columbia v. Heller* in 2008, as the decision remains entirely with the firearm owner regarding what storage method best fits their personal circumstances and defensive needs.

Simply having this option available has changed the conversation around firearm ownership and storage by equipping gun owners to make responsible, life-affirming decisions. It has also created a collaborative referral pathway not only within the firearms community, but among law enforcement agencies, mental health professionals, veterans organizations, suicide prevention organizations, real estate professionals, and others who encounter situations where temporary off-site storage may be appropriate.

In 2023, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives issued a guidance letter (<https://www.atf.gov/media/14311/download>) to Federal Firearms Licensees nationwide, regardless of affiliation with Hold My Guns, outlining lawful processes for both behind-the-counter and locker-based storage options. Seeing this model recognized and clarified at the federal level has been significant, and I have heard directly from retailers and firearm owners about how access to voluntary off-site storage has made a meaningful difference during difficult seasons of life.

Hold My Guns seeks to expand partnerships with FFLs across the United States, including in Ohio. However, because voluntary storage remains a relatively new service model, some retailers have expressed hesitation about offering it due to concerns regarding civil liability.

Senate Bill 273 directly addresses those concerns by providing clear statutory protections while preserving accountability. The bill also protects the confidentiality of firearm owners who choose to store their own firearms, reinforcing trust and confidence in utilizing this service.

Thank you, Senator Koehler, for taking leadership to remove barriers and increase access to voluntary storage. I welcome any questions the Committee may have about voluntary firearm storage, common use cases, the firearms community, and ways Ohio can help increase awareness of this rights-respecting, life-affirming option.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Joy Albrecht