



Ohio Senate
Senate Building
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, Ohio 43215
(614) 466-3780

Committees:

Workforce Development - Chair
Agriculture and Natural Resources
- Vice Chair
Education
Higher Education
Local Government

Kyle Koehler

State Senator
10th District

**Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs
and Public Safety Committee
Senate Bill 273 – Sponsor Testimony
Wednesday, October 8th, 2025**

Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs and Public Safety Committee, thank you for allowing me to present Senate Bill 273 for your consideration and discussion today.

SB 273 was brought to me by Federal Firearm Licensees (FFLs), the Buckeye Firearms Association and Life Side Ohio, which is a Pro-2nd 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 Report¹:

- 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 2nd leading cause of death for Veterans under 45 years old

¹ https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2024/2024-Annual-Report-Part-2-of-2_508.pdf

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 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.

SB 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 2nd 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.

Mr. Chairman and members of this committee, I ask you to consider proponent testimony for SB 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.