

OHIO'S VOICE FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION



## **Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs and Public Safety Committee SB273 Proponent Testimony**

October 15, 2025

2:30 p.m.

Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs, and Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify as a proponent of SB273.

My name is Tony Coder and I am the CEO of the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation, a non-profit focused on breaking stigma around suicide, but also providing strategies for communities, individuals, and families to improve opportunities for mental health wellness.

I would like to thank Senator Koehler for introducing this piece of legislation, which will give firearm retailers the option to serve as a safe storage facility in their local communities.

Ohio loses nearly five people every day to suicide, with 1,777 people dying in 2023, according to the latest state data from earlier this year. 81% of those suicides are male, with the vast majority being men over the age of 25. Over half of those suicides involved a firearm, with 62% of suicides in males were by use of a firearm.

As we try to understand suicide, I want to reference a study by a renowned suicide researcher as he asked the question of suicide attempt survivors, “how much time passed between the time you decided to complete suicide and when you actually attempted suicide?” and one in four of those suicide attempt survivors said that the time was less than five minutes and nearly

70% said it was less than an hour. The power to delay an action by five minutes or less can save a life.

And let us not forget that this can also save children. If any firearms owner has a child who is struggling with mental health and wants to get the firearm out of the house, this legislation can allow the parent to safely store their firearm until they feel that their child is in a good space. Sadly, I am reminded of this because of the funeral of a 13-year-old child that I attended. At the funeral, I spoke to the family, and we spoke later, when the dad told me that they had heard their child arguing with someone on their phone in their room. They didn't know what upset their child, but the child stormed out of the room, picked up the father's firearm that was sitting beside him on a table, and went outside, and that was it. They knew that their child had been struggling with some mental health issues and with some kids at school, but they never believed that this would be the outcome.

SB 273 is a piece of legislation that we support because it does not impose mandates. It provides a voluntary opportunity available to firearm retailers to store a person's firearms and save lives. Even a handful of seconds for someone who is contemplating suicide can save a life. This is not, and should not be, a partisan issue – it is a human issue. No matter where anyone lies on the political or ideological scale, we can all agree that no family should have to endure the devastating loss of a loved one to suicide. Would this legislation end suicide? No – not by a long shot, but it can be another tool and give firearm retailers an even stronger opportunity to save the lives of their customers, their neighbors, and their friends, if they are in need. By supporting this legislation, you are helping individuals who are veterans, young people, and those struggling with mental health.

I am grateful for your time and for allowing me to testify as a proponent of SB 273 alongside firearm retailers, a partnership with which I am proud to be associated. I would be happy to answer any questions.