

Testimony on SB273

Ohio Senate Armed Service, Veterans Affairs and Public Safety Committee

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Submitted by: Michelle Lee Heym

Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present proponent testimony for **SB273, to enact the Keep Them Safe Act to provide guidelines and civil immunity for the voluntary storage of firearms.**

My name is Michelle Heym, I am thrilled to be here today to support SB273. I am a concerned mom, an educator and have been an advocate for gun violence prevention since the Sandy Hook School mass shooting on December 14, 2012, where 20 1st graders, and 6 educators were murdered, as well as the shooter and his mother. I lived in West Simsbury that fateful day, but now live in Powell, Ohio. My 3 girls were in school that day in Simsbury and my sister had three children in Ridgefield, minutes from the shooting. We both had young children at the time, so this is personal. The experience caused me to be a passionate advocate for gun safety and be a voice for those who no longer have a voice. No one should be ok with over 125 people dying every day in this country from gun violence. I am pleased to give proponent testimony to SB273.

After moving to Ohio, I joined the Ohio chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, to advocate for gun safety solutions that will save lives. Moms Demand Action advocates for data driven solutions, including safe storage requirements that would include firearm relinquishment. In my advocacy, I have learned there are an estimated 393 million civilian-owned firearms in the United States. So, #1, With gun ownership comes responsibility. All gun owners should take certain steps to ensure that their guns are used safely, stored securely, and that they don't end up in the wrong hands. SB273 understands these principles.

All gun owners should be educated on the risks associated with guns and the best practices for storing them securely. Under federal law and the vast majority of state laws, a person is not required to complete firearm safety training before buying a gun. Today SB273 is addressing storing firearms securely. In many states, a person can purchase a gun without ever having handled one—and in many states, like Ohio that person would also be allowed to carry it in public without training. This is exactly why SB273 makes sense. We must make sure unsecure firearms don't get in the hands of criminals. Let's refer to the example Senator Koehler used. A military officer from his district needed a safe place to store a drone, because this officer needed to pick up his kids. God forbid, referring to this example, that a military officer brings the drone with him in the car, and it gets stolen, and a criminal gets hold of a drone. Or his kids unintentionally get shot by playing with the drone. We support firearm relinquishment to keep everybody safe and save lives.

The reality is 44,000 Americans lose their lives every year, not to a war, not to drugs, but to gun violence, a predictable and preventable reality that is in epidemic proportions. If we are truly going to stem the tide of gun violence in Ohio, let's agree on this bill.

Let's look at Ohio. Representative Koehler said 7 veterans die every day, let's agree on this safe storage option, of storing firearms with law enforcement or FFL's.

There are risks associated with firearms and making educated decisions about owning and storing guns and this bill is a meaningful step towards preventing gun violence. Gun owners and those contemplating buying guns should learn about the risks associated with guns, including that the presence of a gun in the home which significantly increases the risk of suicide, homicide, death during domestic violence disputes, and unintentional deaths to children and household members. Gun owners should also be educated on relevant secure storage laws and best practices for storing a gun securely. SB273 provides this option.

I've attached a write up by Veteran Chris Evans, who I had the privilege to join at the VFW National convention here in Columbus on August 9, to soft launch Train Smart. I highly recommend reading it. Regarding firearm relinquishment, I think he would agree with me and support SB273. He says, "A natural helper can ask to be **given the keys** or other secure access to the gun locks and gun safes. This is akin to taking the car keys from a friend at a bar who had too much to drink. Giving someone else the keys preserve a person's possession of guns while limiting access during a crisis.

If the previous steps don't create enough time and space to allow the suicidal person to exit the crisis, **out-of-home storage** is an option in some form in most of the U.S. Many states are developing storage maps that can allow natural helpers to more easily access this resource." Let's do this in Ohio with SB273.

Whether it's suicide or a mass shooting, to quote Nicole Hockley, "I know what it's like to get the news that a loved one is never coming home, and my heart is absolutely shattered for the families who just received that excruciating news and for the entire community that has been forever changed by this tragedy."

Nicole's son Dylan was murdered at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

HB273 is a commonsense gun safety solution that will be effective at saving lives and we support it.

Thank you for listening and allowing me to testify, I'm happy to answer any questions.

https://everytownsupportfund.org/how-veterans-and-those-who-care-about-them-can-help-prevent-firearm-suicide/?_gl=1*1k5i4e7*_gcl_au*MTU5NTQ4MDM4NS4xNzYwMjAwMDc0*_ga*MzcyODc0Njl4LjE3NjAyMDAwNzQ.*_ga_1FTV9KT752*czE3NjAyMjAzNTAkbzMkZzEkdDE3NjAyMjEwNjlkajQ4JGwwJGgw*_ga_68QYBV181T*czE3NjAyMjAzNTAkbzMkZzEkdDE3NjAyMjEwNjlkajQ4JGwwJGgw

