

Good afternoon. My name is Joe King, and I am a Manager at Black Wing Shooting Center in Delaware, Ohio. I have worked in the firearm industry for more than 13 years, and throughout that time, I've had the privilege of helping thousands of individuals with little to no firearm experience have a safe, comfortable, and educational introduction to firearms. I've also trained many employees to provide that same supportive experience for others.

My own journey with firearms began when I was just eight years old. From the very beginning, I learned to respect firearms as a tool — first for protection, and later, as a means of recreation and community. That respect has guided me through every part of my career.

At the heart of what I do is education. I've always believed that understanding and open communication are key — not just to firearm safety, but to building connections with people from all walks of life. Over the years, I've met many individuals who have come to the range during some of the most difficult moments of their lives. Sadly, suicide has affected me personally, and those encounters made it clear that I had an opportunity — and a responsibility — to help bridge a gap between gun owners and mental health resources.

Through my involvement with organizations such as Life Side Ohio and the Delaware County Suicide Prevention Coalition, I've worked to connect the firearm community to the conversation around suicide prevention. I've spoken with health care professionals, partnered with fellow range and retail operators across Central Ohio, and collaborated with experts in suicide awareness and prevention. Each of these efforts aims toward one goal: ensuring that gun owners in crisis have safe, judgment-free access to help.

Recently, in a conversation with a member of your Senate, he shared a powerful story — one that underscores why this legislation matters. He told me about a friend who, recognizing he was in crisis, entrusted his firearm collection to him for safekeeping until he was in a better place. That simple act may well have saved a life.

This bill helps close that gap. It creates a clear, safe, and responsible path for those in crisis to temporarily store their firearms — while also protecting ranges and retailers like mine from legal liability. It's a solution that allows us to do what we do best: protect lives, promote safety, and serve our community.

I would like to thank Senator Koehler for his leadership in offering this testimony. I truly believe this legislation will save lives and provide legal protection for organizations that want to do the right thing.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to try to answer any questions you or the committee might have for me.