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Sponsor Testimony for Senate Bill 238

**Ohio Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs & Public Safety
Committee**

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Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs & Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 238, legislation that limits liability for federally licensed firearms dealers and indoor shooting ranges who voluntarily enter into firearm hold agreements with lawful firearm owners.

I am honored to present this commonsense, life-saving legislation. **At its heart, Senate Bill 238 promotes responsible firearm ownership, helps reduce preventable tragedies, and keeps Ohioans safe, all while respecting the rights of lawful gun owners and responsible businesses.**

A firearm hold agreement is a voluntary, private arrangement between a licensed dealer or indoor shooting range and a firearm owner. Under this agreement, the dealer securely stores the owner's firearm for a set period of time and returns it when the agreement ends. These agreements are a practical suicide prevention tool, giving individuals facing a mental health crisis, or other temporary challenges, a safe and responsible way to reduce access to their firearms during vulnerable moments.

However, many dealers have been hesitant to offer this service due to concerns about potential liability. Senate Bill 238 addresses that by providing limited civil liability protections for those who, in good faith, enter into and comply with firearm hold agreements. **The bill ensures that protection applies only when a dealer acts lawfully and does not knowingly return a firearm to someone prohibited from possessing one.** Participation remains entirely voluntary for both the firearm owner and the dealer or range.

This legislation is not about restricting rights; it's about saving lives. It offers a balanced, bipartisan approach that encourages responsible action while preserving Second Amendment protections.

Firearm suicides make up more than half of all gun deaths in our country, including far too many veterans, first responders, and young people. If we can create a safe and legal framework that helps prevent even one of those tragedies, then we have made a meaningful difference.

Many states before us including Maine, Louisiana, Montana, Arkansas, Alabama, and Nevada, have introduced legislation in relation to this issue. **This demonstrates that Senate Bill 238 reflects a principle I, and many others, hold deeply: public safety and personal responsibility must go hand in hand.** By removing unnecessary legal barriers, we empower Ohioans to seek help, to heal, and to return safely to their families.

Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the committee, I respectfully ask for your consideration and support for this important legislation. Thank you for your time, and I would be happy to answer any questions.