

Written Testimony of Sarah Joy Albrecht

Founder, Hold My Guns®

Submitted to the Ohio Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs and Public Safety Committee
Regarding Senate Bill 273

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Weinstein and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony affirming that voluntary firearms storage is working in states across the country and that, if passed, this legislation will help encourage licensed firearms retailers in Ohio to consider offering this service to their customers..

My name is Sarah Joy Albrecht. I am a Range Safety Officer and the founder of Hold My Guns®, a 501c3 nonprofit within the firearms community that partners with licensed firearms retailers to offer voluntary off-site firearms storage. I founded Hold My Guns® in 2018 after my family lost an eighteen-year-old friend to suicide by firearm. During that time of grief, I learned that, while many mental health professionals recommend distance from lethal means in times of crisis, there were many legal barriers for gun owners to simply give a firearm to a trusted friend for safekeeping if they have a situation in their home where off-site storage would help. Furthermore, this recommendation assumes that an individual *has* trusted friends or family members in the first place, let alone those who are logistically and lawfully able to help.

Recognizing this gap, I saw the need for licensed firearms retailers to use their existing infrastructure to offer voluntary storage. I met with firearms attorney Joshua Prince, who sought guidance from the ATF for a lawful process that allows Federal Firearms Licensees (FFLs) to store firearms for their customers.

Since becoming a 501c3 in 2020, our nine partner locations in eight states have stored more than four hundred fifty firearms. Our FFL partners respect the privacy of their customers and do not ask why firearms are being stored, yet gun owners have shared many reasons for choosing this service. Common situations include travel, deployment, home sale, flood or fire restoration, college housing, estate administration, medical treatment, mental health care, divorce or custody transitions, dementia care within the home, and temporary housing such as stays in veterans shelters or domestic violence shelters. Voluntary storage is an option that affirms the personal agency of gun owners who want a secure, off-site option that prevents unauthorized access to firearms.

To be clear, Hold My Guns® is a 501c3 nonprofit, and my role here is purely educational. My purpose is to describe ways voluntary storage makes a difference and saves lives, and to affirm that this legislation will help encourage Ohio FFLs to consider offering this option. The voluntary nature of this option is key. It provides a lawful pathway for personal responsibility and life-affirming choices that support safety and dignity without criminalizing or stigmatizing gun owners. Just knowing that voluntary storage exists has changed the conversation about personal responsibility and suicide prevention within the firearms community.

I applaud lawmakers for examining ways to remove barriers and increase access to voluntary storage and other options that are considerate of lawful gun owners.