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## **Sponsor Testimony for Senate Bill 236**

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

**February 11th, 2025**

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 236**, also known as the **Suicide Self-Defense Act**. I am proud to serve as a joint sponsor of this legislation with my colleague Senator Hicks-Hudson.

Senate Bill 236 is a voluntary, commonsense suicide-prevention measure that gives Ohioans a responsible way to protect themselves during moments of elevated risk while fully respecting constitutional rights.

Each year in this country, roughly 26,000 people lose their lives to firearm suicide. Research shows that having access to a firearm triples a person's risk of death by suicide, and **people who live in states with higher levels of household gun ownership are nearly four times more likely to die by firearm suicide than those in states with lower ownership rates. These risks persist even when accounting for factors such as mental illness, substance use, and economic stress.**

We also know that a suicide attempt is often a moment of crisis, and that most people who survive that moment do not go on to die by suicide.

This tells us that **reducing access to firearms during periods of acute risk can save lives by creating time and space for intervention and recovery.**

While other legislation addresses similar issues, Senate Bill 236 is distinct in its creation of a **confidential, voluntary “Do Not Possess Firearms Registry,”** which allows individuals to temporarily prohibit themselves from purchasing, possessing, or transporting a firearm during periods of heightened vulnerability. Enrollment and removal are initiated solely by the individual. All records are exempt from public disclosure, are permanently destroyed upon removal, and the bill explicitly prohibits discrimination based on participation in the registry.

For individuals who already own firearms, the bill provides a clear and secure process for temporary transfer to law enforcement for safekeeping during the registration period. **A brief waiting period for removal helps ensure safety,** while still allowing for court review when appropriate.

**States across the country, including Washington, Virginia, and Utah, have already taken steps to address this issue through similar voluntary measures known as Donna’s Law registries.** This effort demonstrates that suicide prevention and respect for constitutional rights are not competing values, but complementary ones. Senate Bill 236 reflects a principle many of us hold deeply: public safety and personal responsibility must go hand in hand. By removing unnecessary legal barriers, this bill empowers Ohioans to seek help, to heal, and to return safely to their families and communities.

This legislation **is not about punishment or stigma.** It is about personal responsibility, prevention, and saving lives. Senate Bill 236 empowers individuals to **act proactively** when they know they need help, and it does so in a way that is respectful, voluntary, and narrowly tailored.

Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the committee, I am grateful to Senator Hicks-Hudson for her partnership on this bill and to the committee for your thoughtful consideration. I respectfully ask for your support and would be happy to answer any questions.