



**Hearcel F. Craig**

State Senator

15th District

**Sponsor Testimony for Senate Bill 96**  
**Ohio Senate Ways and Means Committee**

**February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

Thank you, Chair Blessing, Vice Chair Roegner, Ranking Member DeMora, and other members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, for allowing me to testify about Senate Bill 96. I am proud to introduce this legislation with my joint sponsor, Senator Blackshear.

This bill seeks to incentivize gun owners to safely and securely handle and store their firearms by creating two nonrefundable income tax credits. Individuals can claim one credit during tax years in which they complete a gun safety course, class or program and, secondly, they may also claim a credit when they purchase a secure storage device or locking device for a gun.

Gun violence is, of course, a national issue. According to the Gun Violence Archive, last year, there were more than 43,000 individuals in the United States killed in gun-related deaths, and more than 36,000 individuals injured in gun-related incidents nationwide.<sup>1</sup> The Children's Defense Fund of Ohio reports that 1,071 children aged 19 and under in the state have been killed in gun-related incidents. This equates to nearly 66,000 years of life lost by these young Ohioans.<sup>2</sup> A study published in *Injury Epidemiology*, reports that over 90% of guns used in the accidental shooting deaths of children nationwide were left unlocked and loaded.<sup>3</sup>

This suggests that if safe storage of these guns had been incentivized and employed on a larger scale, many children throughout our nation, and within our state, might still be alive today. Our colleagues on both sides of the aisle in the House have proposed other gun related tax exemption bills. We feel our bill is a

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<sup>1</sup> "Gun Violence 2023 Toll". Gun Violence Archive (2023). <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls>

<sup>2</sup> "Gun Violence Protection", Children's Defense Fund – Ohio. <https://cdfohio.org/policy/policy-priorities/gunviolence-protection/>

<sup>3</sup> Viswanathan, Giri. "Most accidental shooting deaths among children involve guns left loaded and unlocked, study finds". Cable News Network. Published June 26, 2023

balanced, reasonable, and targeted approach and deserves consideration as part of the debate whether and how to use tax policy to incentivize safer storage and handling of guns. It is our fervent hope that the incentives created in Senate Bill 96 to safely handle and securely store guns will assist in curbing senseless and preventable gun violence and accidents in our state.

Chair Blessing and members of the committee, thank you very much for the consideration of this bill and the chance for my colleague, Senator Blackshear and I to provide testimony. We would be happy to take any questions at this time.