



Senate Bill 228
Government Oversight & Reform Committee
Tuesday, December 4, 2018
WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Chairman Coley, Vice Chair Uecker, Ranking member Schiavoni, and members of the Senate Government Oversight & Reform Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share testimony on House bill 228, which includes numerous reforms to Ohio's firearms laws. Our testimony is focused on one portion of this bill, which as it currently reads, would prohibit property owners and/or landlords for subsidized housing from placing restrictions on firearms, including requirements that firearms be locked while stored.

LeadingAge Ohio is an association representing mission-driven, values-based providers of long-term services and supports to older Ohioans. Our 400-plus members include life plan communities (CCRCs), skilled nursing facilities, adult day programs, assisted living facilities, county homes, home health agencies and hospices, among others. Included in our membership are over 100 member sites that offer subsidized housing to older adults, filling a critical and growing gap in their communities, and ensuring that older Ohioans who have worked throughout their lives have safe and affordable places to spend their golden years.

Ohio's population is aging rapidly. Ohio is the fifth fastest "graying" state, and along with this comes increased rates of age-related conditions such as dementia. There is the acknowledgment among Ohio's provider community that in order to respond to the demographic challenges before us, we must "right size" care, and delay transitions to more-acute settings wherever possible. This means that across care settings, acuity is rising, which brings me to LeadingAge Ohio's principal concerns pertaining to HB 228.

While much attention is paid to individuals with mental illness owning firearms, we have spent less time focused on ensuring the safety of aging gun owners and their neighbors. An estimated 1 in 10 Ohioans over the age of 65 will be diagnosed with dementia, and roughly one in three own a gun. The intersection of these two groups is where our concerns lie.

A Kaiser Health News report last year detailed over a hundred dementia-related gun fatalities over recent years, but those estimates are likely low, since there is no standard registry or database which tracks the intersection of age-related cognitive decline and gun ownership. The only state that currently tracks both cognitive decline and gun ownership-- Washington—found that 15,000 individuals reported experiencing both cognitive decline and storing their guns unlocked and loaded.

The same report shared the tragic effects of dementia-related gun injury. In these incidents, the most frequent victims are the older adults themselves, followed by their caregivers, loved ones and neighbors.



Allowing subsidized housing operators to continue their current gun policies that they have had in place in rental agreements would ameliorate these concerns. Specifically, many of our members include simple clauses which require firearms to be stored and locked. LeadingAge Ohio has drafted amendment language which would make this small modification to the bill currently under your consideration, and respectfully requests its inclusion by the Committee.

LeadingAge Ohio is grateful for the opportunity to provide comment on the impact this bill would have on community-residing older Ohioans.