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Committees:

- Judiciary – *Ranking Minority Member*
- Veterans & Public Safety – *Ranking Minority Member*
- Government Oversight and Reform
- Health
- Insurance
- Joint Medicaid Oversight
- Joint Legislative Ethics

Veterans and Public Safety Committee
Senator Hoagland, Chairman
Sponsor Testimony on Senate Bill 205
Senator Cecil Thomas
November 15, 2022

Chairman Hoagland, Vice Chairman Johnson and members of the Veterans and Public Safety Committee, thank you for allowing me to present sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 205. This legislation designates the month of June as Gun Violence Awareness Month.

The term gun violence refers to every form of violence committed by firearms. It encapsulates suicide, homicides, domestic violence incidents when a gun is involved, assault with a deadly weapon, and accidental gun injuries. Gun Violence poses a significant public safety risk to Ohioans with roughly 1,500 residents dying from gun-related violence every year.

With respect to gun violence involving suicide, an average of 929 Ohioans commit suicide with a firearm each year. This accounts for over 60% of gun-related deaths in our state. The remaining 40%, gun homicides, result in 571 Ohioans losing their lives each year.

While numbers like these are always concerning, the gun violence crisis has actually worsened in recent years. In 2020 and 2021, we saw record setting numbers for Ohioans who died from firearms. This has led cities around the state to recognize this detrimental issue and declare gun violence a public health crisis and a public health emergency. By designating June as Gun Violence Awareness Month, this legislation would bring the necessary attention to this public health emergency.

I would like to thank Chairman Hoagland, and all committee members for allowing me to offer sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 205. At this time, I am happy to answer any questions from the committee.

