



Proponent Testimony, HR 148

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Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio

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Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the House Public Safety Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Resolution 148.

My name is David Ceraolo, I am a fourth-year medical student in Northeast Ohio and an incoming emergency medicine resident physician. I am here as a member of the Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio's Future Leaders Council and of the broader medical community.

The AMCNO represents more than 7,200 physicians and medical students in our region. For more than 200 years, we have worked diligently to improve and protect public health and the practice of medicine for our doctors and their patients.

In 2024, in recognition of that mission, our organization identified firearm safety as a critical public health concern, particularly as firearms are the leading cause of death among children in the United States. We created the Northeast Ohio Gun Safety Coalition (NEOGSC), and in coordination with our stakeholders and partners, we have provided nearly 600 free firearm lockboxes to community members in health care settings as part of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Store it Safe Program. We've also led education sessions on safe storage in conjunction with the Ohio Chapter of AAP, as well as Stop the Bleed trainings, and we've promoted violence interruption and suicide prevention work.

We know safe storage is an incredibly effective means of preventing gun deaths in children. A study from Nationwide Children's Hospital analyzing 10 years of unintentional firearm fatalities among children found that in the cases where data was available, 90% of the firearms that ultimately killed a child were stored loaded and unlocked¹.

¹ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s40621-023-00438-5>

The thing I fear most in my career is the day I lose a kid. It hasn't happened, yet, but I know one day it will. Some of the hardest emergency room cases are accidents that could have been prevented if a child never had access to guns. I also have a few personal experiences with this issue. When I was in elementary school at 12 years old, my older brother's best friend died by suicide in our family truck with a shotgun to his head. A permanent solution to a temporary problem. His family shotgun was not safely secured.

Firearm deaths, especially those of children, are a massive, and largely preventable problem. We are proud of what we have been able to do, but tackling this challenge is going to require widespread support and effort. That's why we are asking you to vote yes in support of House Resolution 148. Addressing an issue starts with identifying it – that's why it is so important for our leaders in this body to recognize safe storage of firearms as a key part of responsible gun ownership. This resolution is an opportunity to come together and raise awareness for the simple but incredibly effective concept of safe storage in reducing firearm injury.

We ask that you please support this resolution, for the sake of gun owners and families across Ohio. Thank you for this opportunity, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.