



**Testimony of Tyler Smith
Associate Regional Director of Government Affairs
Everytown For Gun Safety**

**Oklahoma State Senate
Senate Finance Committee**

Sales Tax Exemption on Gun Safes

Good Morning Chair and members of the committee,

My name is Tyler Smith and I am the Associate Regional Director for Everytown for Gun Safety. Everytown is the largest gun violence prevention organization in the country with nearly 10 million supporters including moms, mayors, survivors and everyday Americans who are fighting for public safety measures that respect the Second Amendment and help save lives. At the core of Everytown are Mayors Against Illegal Guns, Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America and the Everytown Survivor Network.

Everytown for Gun Safety strongly endorses this committee's interim study on Secure Storage Tax Exemptions. Extensive research underscores the critical importance of secure storage practices in mitigating the risk of gun violence. The secure storage of firearms serves as a protective measure for both children and adults, helping to prevent unintentional shootings, suicides involving firearms, and instances of gun theft.

Every year, over 350 kids unintentionally shoot themselves or someone else.¹ Already this year, there have been 115 deaths from these types of incidents. They often result in life-changing consequences for the victims and their families. Recently, in Choctaw, Oklahoma, a heart-wrenching incident unfolded when a 14-year-old boy accidentally shot his 8-year-old brother in the chest with a firearm that had not been securely stored.² This devastating event underscores the urgent need for legislation that encourages the community to invest in secure firearm storage solutions, taking a significant step towards preventing further unintentional shootings and suicides within the state.

¹ <https://everytownresearch.org/report/notanaccident/>

² <https://www.koco.com/article/oklahoma-choctaw-shooting-walmart/44433658>

Three quarters of school shooters gained access to firearms from a parent or relative.³

The United States Secret Service's research has underscored this troubling fact, revealing that approximately three-quarters of school shooters obtained their weapons from within their own families.

These unfortunate events emphasize the critical need for Oklahoma to take proactive steps towards ensuring the safety of its residents, especially during school events and public gatherings like football games. To address this pressing issue, it is imperative that Oklahoma lawmakers consider the creation of legislation that not only incentivizes responsible firearm storage but also provides protection for children and families in these public settings.

4.6 Million kids live in a home with at least one loaded and unlocked firearm.⁴ This alarming statistic underscores the urgent need for responsible gun ownership and secure storage measures to protect our young ones from preventable accidents and tragedies. Ensuring that firearms are stored in a secure manner, such as using gun safes or locks, is essential to reducing the risk of unauthorized access, unintentional discharges, and potential harm to children. Promoting education and awareness about secure firearm storage practices within communities is also crucial in addressing this pressing issue and safeguarding our children's well-being.

The introduction of such legislation represents a crucial first step in safeguarding the lives of Oklahoma residents, particularly its youngest members. Tennessee just enacted a law providing tax incentives for purchasing secure storage devices during its recent special session in response to the shooting at the Covenant School in Nashville. Research highlights that nearly one in every three unintentional shooters is a preschooler⁵, highlighting the gravity of the problem and the necessity for preventive measures. By implementing laws that incentivize secure storage, we can work towards reducing the tragic toll of preventable incidents and fostering a safer environment for all Oklahomans.

Oklahoma has the 6th Highest rate of gun suicide in the nation.⁶ The high prevalence of gun suicides underscores the importance of disrupting easy access to firearms during a time of crisis. Providing a sales tax exemption for secure firearm storage devices would be a laudable step to increase secure storage in the state. By incentivizing responsible firearm storage practices, this policy would not only contribute to reducing the risk of suicide but would also underscore the state's commitment to safeguarding the well-being of its residents.

³ https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/Protecting_Americas_Schools.pdf

⁴ <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2789269>

⁵ <https://everytownresearch.org/report/notanaccident/>

⁶ <https://everystat.org/#Oklahoma>

Twenty six states have passed a form of Secure storage laws across the U.S.⁷ These measures have been met with widespread support from both sides of the political spectrum, as states recognize the critical role they play in fostering safer communities.

These secure storage laws, which incentives people with children in the home or all gun owners in the state to store their firearms securely when not in use, are a practical and effective means of reducing the risk of accidents, unauthorized access, and firearm theft. The bipartisan support they've garnered highlights the shared commitment to promoting responsible gun ownership and enhancing public safety.

Creating financial incentives to purchase secure storage devices has the potential to create a ripple effect of positive change within the community. It encourages open conversations about firearm safety. It fosters a sense of community responsibility and underscores the idea that we are all in this together, working towards a safer, more compassionate society.

In summary, creating a tax exemption for secure gun storage devices represents a commendable initiative that aligns with the values of responsible gun ownership. They signify Oklahoma's commitment to safeguarding its citizens, reducing the risk of suicides and unintentional shootings, and fostering a culture of responsible firearm ownership. This policy is not just a great start but a pivotal milestone in the journey towards a safer state.

Sincerely,

Tyler Smith
Associate Regional Director of Government Affairs
Everytown For Gun Safety

⁷ <https://www.everytown.org/solutions/responsible-gun-storage/>