

February 28, 2024

Dear Chair Moller, Committee members, and staff,

Thank you for holding this hearing and soliciting written testimony from the community.

My name is Kathleen Anderson and I am a constituent (64B), clinical social worker, mother to three young children, and volunteer with Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America.

I am writing today in support of HF4300, [strengthening requirements for secure storage of firearms and ammunition](#).

I got involved with gun violence prevention because I am concerned about the safety and well-being on my children, but also because I have historically worked with children and families disproportionately impacted by gun violence: low income families, marginalized and justice-system involved youth, survivors of domestic/intimate partner violence, and those living with suicidal ideation.

Because of my volunteer work educating the community on the importance of secure firearm storage, I know the stats and the potential impact of this evidence-based approach to gun violence prevention. Requiring gun owners to safely secure firearms can help reduce unintentional shootings by and of children, as well as prevent firearm suicide and gun theft. An estimated 54 percent of gun owners do not lock all of their guns. They fail to store them unloaded, locked, and separate from ammunition, as experts recommend, thus presenting a clear and present danger to children and those experiencing a mental health crisis.

Most significantly in Minnesota (and unmet by our current Child Access Protection Law), is the role that unsecured guns play in suicides. Nearly three-quarters of gun deaths in Minnesota are suicides, a much higher average than nationally. The best practice for those living with suicidal ideation is to counsel them (and their loved ones) on reducing access to lethal means. Most forms of self-harm are rarely fatal (estimates are three to four percent) and most individuals go on to live full lives and not make a repeat attempt. That second chance matters. When someone attempts suicide with a firearm, it is fatal 90 percent of the time. There is no time to stop, reconsider, be interrupted, or be found and receive medical attention. A 2015 study found that states that require privately owned guns to be locked have 68 percent lower suicide rates, on average, than states that do not codify this measure into law.

Additionally, secure storage practices protect gun owners from gun theft. Ninety-five percent of all stolen firearms are taken from private homes and vehicles, so safe storage is an important factor in deterring gun theft and preventing guns from being used to facilitate future crime.

My experience leads me to emphasize that laws that require proper storage seek to encourage responsible behavior and ensure that those who fail to secure their firearms can be held accountable.

We all need gun owners in our society to be responsible gun owners. We all need to talk about secure storage and recognize its potential to save lives. This is a public safety measure.

I encourage members of the committee to vote **YES** on HF 4300.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue.

With gratitude,

Kathleen Anderson, LGSW  
Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America  
Saint Paul, MN