

Conference Committee on SF 2909  
Chair: Representative Kelly Moller

## SF 2909

Tuesday May 2, 2023 at 10:00 AM  
Room 5 State Office Building

### IN SUPPORT – Background Checks on All Firearm Sales/Transfers and Extreme Risk Protection Orders

Dear Chair Moller and members of the Conference Committee on SF 2909,

As a family physician, St. Paul resident, and concerned aunt of 4 school-aged children in the St. Paul Public Schools, I am testifying in **strong support of including the provisions for background checks on private firearm sales/transfers and extreme risk protection orders (ERPOs) in the final omnibus public safety and judiciary finance bill.** Gun violence is a public health crisis. The facts are startling: Firearms are now the number one killer of children in our country.<sup>1</sup> In Minnesota three fourths of firearms deaths are by suicide<sup>2</sup>, disproportionately affecting white men in Greater Minnesota. The rates of firearm suicide by young people in their teens and twenties, particularly young people of color, have been rising over the past decade nationwide.<sup>3</sup> Firearm homicides continue to disproportionately affect communities of color, with Black people being 10 times more likely than white counterparts to die of firearm homicide.<sup>4</sup> Domestic abusers in the U.S. are 5 times more likely to kill their female partner if the abuser has access to a firearm.<sup>5</sup> And the list goes on.

Our gun violence public health crisis is complex and requires action on many levels. While no one law will prevent every firearm injury or death, passing the background checks and ERPO provisions will contribute in important ways. It will help close the loophole in federal law that allows people who cannot pass a background check to purchase firearms from an unlicensed seller with no questions asked. It will also give families and law enforcement a much-needed tool to temporarily separate firearms from people known to be at risk of harm to self or others. Together, these provisions will help keep firearms out of the hands of domestic abusers, suicidal loved ones, and would-be violent criminals. These provisions will save lives.

For far too long, obstruction has prevented our state leaders from passing common-sense gun violence prevention measures like background checks on private firearm sales and ERPOs. The time is now for the Minnesota Legislature to take action to help turn the tide of the gun violence epidemic. Passage of these provisions will be a significant step in that direction. I urge you to include them in the omnibus bill.

Thank you very much for working to make our communities safe places to live and raise the next generations of Minnesotans.

Emily Benzie, M.D.  
Family Physician  
St. Paul, MN

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<sup>1</sup> Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions. (2022). A Year in Review: 2020 Gun Deaths in the U.S. Available: <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/gun-violence-solutions>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/injury/midas/mnvdrs.html> (last accessed April 29, 2023)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.thetrace.org/2022/02/firearm-suicide-rate-cdc-data-teen-mental-health-research/>

<sup>4</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety, "Impact of Gun Violence on Black Americans," available at <https://www.everytown.org/issues/gun-violence-black-americans/> (last accessed April 29, 2023).

<sup>5</sup> Jacquelyn C. Campbell et al., "Risk Factors for Femicide in Abusive Relationships: Results from a Multisite Case Control Study," *American Journal of Public Health* 93, no. 7 (July 2003): 1089–97, <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.93.7.1089>.