

2/28/2024

Minnesota State Legislature

Written Testimony for Gun Violence Prevention Legislation

Hello, my name is Bethany Olson (Edina, MN) and I am submitting this written testimony in strong support of the following gun violence prevention legislation: Secure Storage - HF 396 (Becker-Finn), SF916 (Gustafson) and Lost & Stolen Firearms - HF601 (Her), SF606 (Westlin).

I am grateful to the Minnesota legislature for passing legislation in the 2023 session to support Extreme Risk Protection Orders and close background check loopholes for purchases of firearms in Minnesota, and I urge legislators from across the political spectrum to support passage of legislation to require secure storage and the reporting of lost and stolen firearms.

We need look no further than earlier this month to understand the importance of continuing to pursue solutions to keep firearms away from children and those who have demonstrated that they are too dangerous to possess firearms. I am sure it weighs on all of us to hear of school shootings in communities throughout the United States, to hear of the violence at the Super Bowl parade in Kansas City, to think of the first responders slain in Burnsville and memorialized today. We can feel the heaviness and the fear from gun violence, but it's not just emotion that tells us we need to do more. The statistics paint an even more grim reality.

An average of 41 children and teens die from guns in Minnesota every year, and 55% of those gun deaths are death by suicide. Across the United States, 54% of gun owners do not lock all of their guns, and 4.6 million children live in households with at least 1 unlocked and loaded firearms. Think of the tragedy we can prevent by taking steps to require safe storage (and separate storage of ammunition) in Minnesota. The Journal of American Medical Association estimates that $\frac{1}{3}$ of youth unintentional deaths and youth deaths by suicide with a gun could be prevented if just half of US households with children switched from keeping unsecured firearms in the home to using secure storage. The majority of school shooters acquired the weapons used in their attacks from their own home or that of a relative, and the vast majority of children who live in a home with a firearm know the location of those firearms. Implementing safe storage standards in Minnesota has the potential to save countless lives.

We also know that the majority of guns recovered from crime scenes are stolen guns. Safe storage can help prevent gun thefts, but I also believe we must require gun owners to report when their firearms are lost or stolen. This will help law enforcement and will help prevent gun trafficking, as well as reducing violent crime committed with firearms.

Thank you for your consideration of these two gun violence prevention measures. I hope you will take seriously the impact of implementing just these two measures, and continue to work towards safer homes and communities in Minnesota.