



Friday, February 3, 2023

Minnesota House Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee

Dear Chair Moller and Members of the Committee,

Protect Minnesota, the only independent, state-based organization devoted to gun violence prevention in Minnesota, strongly endorses the vitally important, sensible gun violence prevention bills, HF 396, HF14, HF15 and HF601, that are being considered in committee today.

In 2021, 570 people were killed by firearms in Minnesota, with suicide by firearm responsible for 68% of those deaths. This number illustrates the devastating impact gun violence has on all our communities, from the Twin Cities to Greater Minnesota. Every Minnesotan killed by a firearm leaves grieving and traumatized family members and friends. Protect Minnesota urges the Public Safety Committee to vote for today's important bills:

HF 296 Safe Storage: Minnesota currently only has child access prevention laws in place. Requiring secure storage of firearms would help prevent accidents and other fatalities. This legislation would help decrease Minnesota's 341 gun suicides each year by putting time and space between a person in crisis and their ability to access a firearm. Nationwide over 380,000 guns are stolen each year, and this legislation would help lower that number in Minnesota. Those who securely store their guns are 60% less likely to die by firearm suicide and three times less likely for their guns to be stolen. We thank Rep. Becker Finn for introducing this legislation and urge committee members to vote in favor of it.

HF14 Criminal Background Checks: Expanding Criminal Background Checks to include private gun sales to ensure the prospective buyer can legally possess a firearm is a practical method to reduce the sale of guns to prohibited purchasers. This legislation is an essential step to closing the loophole that allows those who can't legally purchase a gun from doing so anyway from a private dealer. Studies have shown that in Connecticut, a state that has a permit-to-purchase law, firearm homicides have decreased by 40% and suicide rates have decreased by 15% because of these laws. We thank Rep. Dave Pinto for introducing this legislation and urge committee members to vote in favor of it.

HF 15 Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPO): These laws, often called Red Flag laws, give family members – who are often the first person to see dangerous warning signs that their loved one is likely to hurt themselves or another – a way to petition a court for a temporary order to prevent the individual from accessing a gun, thereby reducing the likelihood they will shoot themselves or another person. Between 2009 and 2020, 56% of mass shooters showed warning signs that would have been grounds for an ERPO, including the Allina Health Care shooting in Buffalo, MN, and 44% clearly communicated their intention in advance. ERPOs give the perpetrators' family or law enforcement a mechanism to petition for protection. We thank Rep. Rep. Cedrick Frazier for introducing this legislation and urge committee members to vote in favor of it.

HF601 Require gun owners to report lost or stolen firearms: Researchers estimate that nationwide, over 380,000 guns are stolen from private citizens annually. Gun owners in 15 states and Washington DC are required to report when their firearms are lost or stolen. Doing so allows for a better understanding of how many firearms are stolen and can help in investigations of gun trafficking, and studies have shown a reduction of 46% in illegal gun movement when lost or stolen firearm reporting is required. We thank Rep. Kaohly Her for introducing this legislation and urge committee members to vote in favor of it.

Protect Minnesota is committed to working with members of the Minnesota legislature to enact these essential legislative proposals to reduce the number of Minnesotans who are killed by gun violence every year. Thank you for your time and attention to this vitally important issue.

Sincerely,

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