

Testimony of Amber Finseth Smith for HF 4359
Everytown Survivor Fellowship Member & Volunteer with Moms Demand Action

Public Safety Finance and Policy
Ethics Committee

Co-Chair Novotny and Moller and Committee Members,

My name is Amber Finseth Smith, and I am writing today to urge the committee to support HF 4359, a bill to ban binary triggers and strengthen straw purchasing laws, respectively.

My brother, Adam Finseth, was murdered while serving his community as a firefighter-paramedic for Burnsville. On the morning of February 18th, 2024, he was shot and killed while tending to two police officers, Paul and Matt, and attempting to keep seven children from harm. My brother was a veteran and had also survived cancer. But it was gun violence in an American suburban neighborhood that ended his life.

I am testifying today because this horrific crime was preventable. The person who murdered Adam, Paul, and Matt had access to and used an assault weapon, high-capacity magazines, as well as a binary trigger and blackout ammunition. He fired over 100 rounds in a short amount of time, killing three first responders and injuring one. Despite being legally prohibited from possessing firearms, he obtained five weapons through straw purchases, two of those used in the shooting.

My family and community know what it costs when a shooter can fire faster. Binary triggers and forced-reset triggers dramatically increase a semi-automatic weapon's rate of fire, and in some cases, approach fully automatic fire. The research is clear: more rounds per second means more victims. Banning these modifications is an evidence-based intervention with a direct line to reducing mass casualty death tolls.

I encourage members of the committee to vote YES on HF 4359, not only for our children and families but for the health and safety of the people who keep us safe.

Thank you for considering this testimony and this important legislation.

There are few more things more important than keeping our community safe. That is why I support HP 4359.

Binary triggers and forced-reset increase a weapon's rate of fire. These modifications pose a danger to the public because they can lead to significantly more deaths and injuries when a gun is employed.

On July 14, 2023, in Fargo, N.D., Mohamad Barakat opened fire on officers responding to a car accident. He had four semi-automatic handguns and semi-automatic rifles, but specifically chose the one equipped with a binary trigger to carry out the attack. One officer was killed, and two officers and a civilian were wounded.

And much closer to where you are sitting now, in Burnsville, MN, on February 18, 2024, two police officers and a firefighter-paramedic were killed by a gunman using a weapon with a binary trigger. This shooting directly prompted the original legislative push for the ban. Since Shannon Goode's prior conviction for a violent crime meant it was now illegal for Goode to possess a gun, his girlfriend had purchased one for him. HP 4359 is one more step we can take to keep our families and law enforcement safe by reaffirming and tightening liability for illegal firearm transfers, and eliminating a key exception that previously protected some family transfers.

This is a common-sense firearm bill that will protect all Minnesotans. Please pass HP 4359



Tuesday, March 24th, 2026

Minnesota State House Public Safety Committee

Co-Chair Moller, Co-Chair Novotny, and members of the Minnesota State House Public Safety Committee,

I write today on behalf of GIFFORDS in strong support of HF4359, a bill to outlaw binary triggers and address straw purchases of firearms. GIFFORDS is a leader in the movement to end gun violence in America. Led by former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, our team brings decades of political, legal, and policy expertise to the fight for gun safety.

Binary triggers increase the rate of fire of semiautomatic weapons to be comparable to that of a machine gun, posing a grave danger to communities across Minnesota. The gun industry has been able to circumvent restrictions on machine guns by marketing and selling devices like binary triggers to attach to certain firearms. Conversion devices like binary triggers serve to dramatically increase casualties in shooting and have been used in high profile mass casualty events across the country. This bill would reenact the ban on binary triggers that was passed in 2024.

This bill would also reenact changes made to strengthen laws that address the straw purchasing of firearms. Straw purchases, which involve a “straw” buyer illegally purchasing a firearm that is actually intended for another person, are the most common tactic used in the illegal trafficking of firearms. According to a survey of firearm licensees from the Russell Sage Journal of Social Sciences, there are more than 30,000 attempted straw purchases each year.

On February 18th, 2024 the community of Burnsville was devastated when police officers Paul Elmstrand and Matthew Ruge, and firefighter paramedic Adam Finseth were killed in the line of duty. Between September 2023 and January 2024, the defendant in this case knowingly purchased multiple firearms from licensed dealers and transferred them to her partner despite being aware that he was a convicted felon prohibited from possessing them. The weapons included AR-15–style components and a firearm modified with a binary trigger. By strengthening Minnesota’s laws related to straw purchasing and binary triggers, legislators can prevent future tragedies like this.

Combatting the scourge of gun violence in Minnesota and across the United States will take cooperation and a multi-faceted approach. We are confident that passing this bill into law will save lives, and we urge this committee to support this critical piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

Spencer Myers
State and Local Policy Attorney, GIFFORDS Law Center

Subject: Support for HF4359 – Public Safety Protections

Dear Chairs Moller and Novotny, Vice Chairs Feist and Witte, and Members of the Public Safety Committee,

My name is Brian Cohn, and I live in Lakeville, Minnesota. I am writing in strong support of HF4359.

This bill addresses a critical public safety risk: the combination of illegal firearm access and devices that dramatically increase a weapon's rate of fire.

Minnesota has already seen the consequences. In February 2024, Burnsville Police Officers Paul Elmstrand and Matthew Ruge, along with firefighter/paramedic Adam Finseth, were killed while responding to a domestic violence call. The shooter—prohibited from possessing firearms—obtained weapons through a straw purchaser and used a rifle equipped with a binary trigger, firing more than 100 rounds at first responders.

Binary triggers allow a firearm to fire on both the pull and release of the trigger, effectively doubling the rate of fire. In an active response situation, this compresses reaction time, increases exposure risk, and heightens the likelihood of mass casualties—particularly for officers and first responders.

HF4359 takes a targeted approach by reinstating the prohibition on binary triggers and strengthening penalties for straw purchasing—the primary pipeline through which prohibited individuals obtain firearms. Together, these provisions directly reduce risk to both the public and law enforcement.

This is a practical, enforceable step to prevent future tragedies like Burnsville and to better protect those who serve on the front lines.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Brian Cohn
Lakeville, Minnesota

Testimony of Julie Legler for HF 4359
Minnesota House Public Safety Finance and Policy

Chair Moller, Chair Novotny and Committee Members,

My name is Julie Legler, and I am writing today to urge the committee to support HF 4359. As a former resident of Burnsville now residing in Lakeville, I watched with horror the news about the Burnsville first responders' deaths in February of 2024.

Binary triggers have been used in multiple officer shootings, including the 2024 Burnsville first responder deaths. Why is the novelty of doubling one's shooting speed outweigh this tragic loss of human life?

The Burnsville shootings also involved straw purchases by a household member. Stricter legislation concerning straw purchases is needed to reduce the odds of this kind of tragedy happening again.

I encourage members of the committee to vote YES on HF 4359.

Thank you for considering this testimony and this important legislation.

Sincerely,
Julie Legler
16162 Duvane Way
Lakeville, MN 55044

Testimony of Elizabeth Wild for HF 4359

Minnesota House Public Safety Finance and Policy

Chair Moller, Chair Novotny and Committee Members,

My name is Elizabeth Wild, and I am writing today to urge the committee to support HF 4359

Why in the world would we allow a modification that makes a semi-automatic firearm closer to an automatic weapon? Binary triggers have been used in multiple officer shootings, including the 2024 Burnsville first responder deaths. The novelty of doubling one's shooting speed is far outweighed by this loss of human life.

The Burnsville shootings also involved straw purchases by a household member. Tighter legislation is needed to ensure the odds of this happening are lower in the future.

I encourage members of the committee to vote YES on HF 4359.

Thank you for considering this testimony and this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Wild
Lifelong Minnesotan

Testimony of Patty Matthews for HF 4359
Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee and Ethics Committee

Co-Chairs are Paul Novotny and Kelly Moller and Committee Members,

My name is Patty Matthews and I am writing today to urge the committee to support HF 4359, a bill which:

- Keeps Minnesota's trigger device restrictions intact
- Reaffirms and tightens liability for illegal firearm transfers
- Eliminates a key exception that previously protected some family transfers

The guns used in the Burnsville tragedy on February 18, 2024, were straw purchases. As was the gun used at the Truck Park Shooting in St. Paul in 2021.

I am the mother of a Burnsville officer who has served with the Burnsville Police Department for 23 years. In the early morning hours of February 18, 2024, we learned that two police officers had been shot. With deep fear, we tried to reach our son, but he did not respond. For more than an hour, we did not know whether he was one of the victims. The aftermath of this tragedy lives in our lives, our son's life and our two granddaughter's fear for their father.

At only 22 years of age, a friend was enjoying a girl's night out when two men started arguing and then shooting. She hid behind and under a food truck and watched as blood was spattering everywhere. The man next to her was shot in the leg. Even with extensive therapy, five years later she still has nightmares, looks for exits, and has deep fears for her children in public.

I am asking you, as elected officials, to represent the will of Minnesotans and vote YES on

HF 4359 to eliminate any loopholes for straw purchases and reinstate the trigger device ban.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your support of HR4359.

Respectfully,
Patty Matthews

Testimony of Richard Cowles for HF 4359

My name is Richard Cowles. I am writing today to urge the committee to support HF 4359, a bill that would formally reenact the ban on binary triggers and tighten penalties for straw purchasing firearms.

I am a 70-year resident of Minnesota who is committed to doing everything I can to ensure that my grandchildren grow up and live with the same kind of peace of mind, free of fear of gun violence, that I benefited from in my youth and young adult life.

I am testifying today because:

Shootings have become more and more frequent, and closer and closer to home. The Annunciation mass shooting, the assassinations of Former Speaker Melissa Hortman and her husband Mark, and the murders of Burnsville first responders are reminders that every effort to restrict access to high-powered weapons may save lives.

Binary triggers and forced-reset triggers increase a weapon's rate of fire to mimic a fully automatic machine gun, likely leading to more deaths in a mass shooting. Binary triggers and straw purchases were both factors in the 2024 Burnsville first responder shootings, leading to their ban in the last legislative session. The law was struck down due to its passage as part of an Omnibus bill. This bill would remedy that, reinstating Minnesota's trigger device restrictions and reaffirming and tightening liability for illegal firearm transfers.

I encourage members of the committee to vote YES on HF 4359.

Thank you for considering this testimony and this important legislation.

Testimony of Susan Wehrenberg for HF 4359

Minnesota House Public Safety Finance and Policy

Chair Moller, Chair Novotny and Committee Members,

My name is Susan Wehrenberg, and I am writing today to urge the committee to support HF 4359

Why in the world would we allow a modification that makes a semi-automatic firearm closer to an automatic weapon? Binary triggers have been used in multiple officer shootings, including the 2024 Burnsville first responder deaths. The novelty of doubling one's shooting speed is far outweighed by this loss of human life.

The Burnsville shootings also involved straw purchases by a household member. Tighter legislation is needed to ensure the odds of this happening are lower in the future.

I encourage members of the committee to vote YES on HF 4359.

Thank you for considering this testimony and this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Susan Wehrenberg
Lifelong Minnesotan