

To Committee Chair Representative Kelly Moller, Vice Chair Representative Sandra Feist, and members of the Committee,

My name is Rachel Dick and I am a graduate student in the neuroscience PhD program at the University of Minnesota. I am writing in strong support of HF 396, HF 14, HF 15, and HF 601. These bills are common sense gun safety reforms that will make all of us safer.

I am sure that many of us, without much effort or prompting, can recall the details of several horrific mass shootings in the United States. There are many city names that I never should have had to learn, including Uvalde, Texas, Aurora Springs, Colorado, and Sandy Hook, Connecticut, and yet because of the devastating consequences of someone having easy access to a gun, these cities have been on the front-page news. This doesn't even take into account all the gun violence that we don't hear about in national media – women shot by their domestic abusers, veterans dying from suicide, teenagers fatally escalating conflicts with other teenagers.

I understand that there is no single law, or even a collection of laws, that can prevent all incidents. But as a scientist studying mental health and psychiatric disorders, I am tired of hearing the line that gun violence is caused by mental illness. Most people with psychiatric conditions are not a threat to anyone, and if they do have access to weapons, they are much more likely to injure themselves than another person. Every country on earth has people with mental health disorders. No other nation has seen the level of gun-related deaths that America regularly tolerates, and no other citizens carry the fear of being killed in the supermarket, a movie theater, or even the Minnesota State Fair the way that we do. What needs to change are our laws.

The collection of bills being discussed in today's committee hearing are smart, reasonable, and urgently necessary. The recent school shooting by a six-year-old child in Newport News, Virginia makes it clear why mandatory safe storage of firearms is necessary. Closing loopholes such as imposing background checks on the transfer of firearms and requiring lost and stolen firearms to be reported means that fewer guns will end up in the wrong hands. And empowering members of law enforcement and our communities to speak up when they know that a loved one is at risk of making an unsafe decision, which will help protect all of us. We cannot change all the problems related to the easy access to guns in our society and the loose gun laws in surrounding states. However, we as Minnesotans have a responsibility to do our part. If these laws can save even one life, then they are worth passing.

Thank you for your time and service,

Rachel Dick  
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