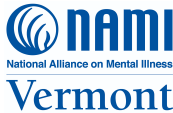




Vermont Chapter

INCORPORATED IN VERMONT



VERMONT ACADEMY OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS



Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems

February 28, 2023

Chair Lalonde and honorable members of the House Judiciary Committee:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to you in strong support of H.230, sponsored by Rep. Alyssa Black, which would require firearms to be stored securely in homes where children or people prohibited from purchasing or possessing firearms are likely to gain access, promote education about secure firearm storage, permit family & household members to petition courts for Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs), and create a waiting period for firearm sales.

Vermont’s firearm suicide crisis touches so many communities across the state. While reviewing the bill, the House Health Care Committee heard stories from people who are family members of those who took their own lives – people who testified that they’ll never be the same, and that not a day goes by when they don’t think of the loved ones they lost. H.230 will save more families from enduring that same heartbreak by limiting easy access to firearms for people who are experiencing suicidal ideations.

The proposed policies in H.230 are all sensible steps to reduce access to lethal means for people in crisis. As Dr. Matthew Miller of the Harvard Injury Control Research Center stated in his testimony, “There is nothing that we know... can have a larger, or more immediate, or well-established effect on decreasing the number of people who are dying by suicide than reducing access to firearms during critical vulnerable periods.” Amongst commonly used methods of self-harm, firearms are [by far the most lethal](#), with a fatality rate of approximately 90%. Only 4% of people who attempt suicide by other methods will die, and [the vast majority](#) of those who survive a suicide attempt do not go on to die by suicide.

Vermont is currently the only state in New England without some form of firearm storage law. These laws [are associated with](#) a reduction in both firearm self-injuries and homicides among young people. These laws can also keep students, educators, and administrators safer at school, as research shows that [roughly three quarters](#) of school shooters acquired their firearm from the home of a parent or close relative.

By providing a “cooling off” period before a firearm sale is allowed to proceed, waiting period laws allow people in crisis experiencing suicidal ideations time to reconsider their choice. These laws are associated with reduced suicide rates. Expanding eligible petitioners under Vermont’s [lifesaving](#) ERPO law to include family and household members, as many other states have, will allow those who are best positioned to know if their loved one is at risk of harming themselves or others to directly petition a court to temporarily remove that person’s access to firearms.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this bill. We urge you to support H.230 and pass it to the House floor for a vote.

Sincerely,

AFT Vermont

American Academy of Pediatrics Vermont Chapter

Everytown for Gun Safety

Leaves of Change VT

Giffords: Courage to Fight Gun Violence

Gunsense Vermont

NAMI Vermont

Vermont Academy of Family Physicians

Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems

Vermont Medical Society

Vermont Moms Demand Action

Vermont-NEA

Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence

Vermont Psychiatric Association

Vermont Students Demand Action