



For Immediate Release

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GUN SAFETY ADVOCATES SPEAK IN FAVOR OF H. 610 AT PUBLIC HEARING

Montpelier, Vt. - Vermont gun safety advocates came to the state house today to speak in favor of the commonsense gun safety legislation, H. 610.

The data is clear. By closing the Charleston Loophole and giving survivors of domestic violence a mechanism to protect themselves, this legislation will save lives. Vermonters from across the state drove through adverse weather to voice their support for this legislation.

Reverend Thomas Ely (retired Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont) of Newfane testified:

H. 610 is about safety. A fully completed background check is a safety measure offering a higher degree of assurance that criminals, domestic abusers and the dangerously mentally ill are not able to purchase firearms. It makes common sense to close this loophole. Please pass this legislation for the safety of all the people of Vermont.

Anna Niemiec of Burlington testified:

If this bill becomes law, it makes it more difficult for an abuser to get their hands on a gun while subject to a relief from abuse order. That difficulty can make a difference. Remember the abuser chose to take an action that caused them to temporarily lose their right to possess a gun. Their choice.

Dr. Chin, a Vermont licensed Child Clinical Psychologist, testified about a first-grader whose mother had been physically abused by a domestic partner:

After one especially vicious assault the man put a gun to both their heads and threatened to shoot them if they ever told anyone. Keeping the secret to protect his mother and himself cost him his mental health, friendships, and education. He also learned that violence is the way to get what you want or to punish those who you don't like. As these children grow older they are at high risk for delinquency, dropping out of school,

substance abuse, and domestic violence. I urge lawmakers to protect the rights and lives of the victims and other family members of domestic violence by voting for H. 610.

Bob Williamson of South Woodstock testified:

You'll hear from many today, but the voices you won't hear are the 163 Vermonters shot to death in a domestic dispute since 1994. Nor will you hear from the 645 folks who in a moment of despair took their own lives with a firearm just since 2011. Their silence looms over the statehouse and cloaks this hearing.

GunSense Vermont is a non-partisan group that works to ensure that all Vermonters are free from gun violence. We work with local and national organizations, students and survivors using evidence-based practices to advocate for laws that reduce gun violence in Vermont. GunSense also informs and educates Vermont residents on all aspects of gun violence, including suicide, homicide, intimidation, and domestic violence.

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Dear friends-

As an addendum to the press release sent earlier this evening regarding the public hearing on H.610, GunSense would also like to note that testimony in favor of the bill outnumbered testimony against the bill.

We thank the many brave women and men who came forward to share personal and sometimes difficult information in service of making Vermont a safer state for all.

-Sharon Panitch