

Dear Senate Judiciary Committee and Committee Assistant,

I am writing in support of H.230, An act relating to implementing mechanisms to reduce suicide.

Please ask the committee assistant to add this to the record. Thank you.

I see that you have started discussing this bill and will continue next week.

Vermont has a serious gun problem, as evidenced by all the statistics in Section 1, Findings. While I would like all gun violence to cease, it's clear that suicide is the most serious problem in our particular state.

I was especially saddened by the fact that children are 4.4 times more likely to die by suicide in a home with a firearm compared to a home without a firearm. I had mostly heard of men committing suicide.

Certainly secure firearms storage would help protect children as well as everyone else in the household. This bill would require that firearms be locked away or rendered inoperable by a safety device and kept separately from ammunition in premises where children or someone prohibited from possessing a firearm might be able to access them.

This seems to be common sense and all other New England states have firearm storage laws.

Likewise, a waiting period for firearms transfers is common sense. Individuals' moods can shift quickly, and an impulse to kill oneself could disappear. A waiting period of a minimum of 72 hours is reasonable.

In addition, I have read that Vermont has the 16th highest rate of gun trafficking in the nation because our laws are looser than neighboring states. This brings crime and often drug trafficking as well. A 72-hour waiting period would make our state less attractive for trades of guns for drugs.

The bill also would give a family or household member the ability to file a petition with the court to remove firearms from someone deemed to be an "extreme risk" to them and others. Vermont is one of only five states that does not permit family and household members to directly petition courts in this instance.

I am grateful that Vermont Attorney General Charity Clark has vowed to defend the bill in court if challenged.

Please vote in favor of H.230.

Thank you.

Ann Schroeder
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