



To: House Committee on Government Operations & Military Affairs

From: Jessa Barnard, Executive Director, Vermont Medical Society

Date: May 21, 2025

Re: S.131 - An act relating to approval of an amendment for the charter of the City of Burlington relating to the possession of firearms

On behalf of the Vermont Medical Society's 3100 members, made up of physicians and PAs from across Vermont, we are writing to express our support for the passage of S.131, which aims to improve public safety in Burlington by prohibiting the possession of firearms in establishments licensed to serve alcoholic beverages.

VMS has strong policies in favor of protecting public health, including preventing and treating substance use disorder, and advocating for firearm safety measures to prevent premature deaths.

As physicians and healthcare professionals committed to advancing public health and safety, we recognize the well-documented risks associated with mixing alcohol and firearms. Alcohol use and gun violence are leading causes of preventable injury and death in the United States, killing 140,000 and more than 48,000 people annually, respectively.^{1,2} These issues are most deadly when combined; research indicates that alcohol misuse is linked to an increased risk of gun violence, including interpersonal violence and gun related suicide.^{3,4}

We need to address the argument that "guns will make us safer," as Burlington continues to experience an increase in firearm-related homicides and gun violence incidents. The research actually shows that just the presence of a firearm can increase aggressive thoughts and actions and may escalate minor arguments or confrontations.⁵

By banning firearms in Burlington bars and restaurants that serve alcohol, this legislation takes an important step towards reducing preventable injuries and fatalities, protecting patrons and staff, and promoting public safety in our state's largest city. The Vermont Medical Society urges the committee to support this bill. Thank you for your consideration.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022). [Alcohol and Public Health](#).

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023). [National Center for Health Statistics](#).

³ Branas CC, Han S. & Weibe DJ. (2016). Alcohol use and firearm violence. *Epidemiologic Reviews*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/epirev/mxv010>

⁴ Kuhns JB, Exum ML, Clodfelter TA, & Bottia MC. (2013). The prevalence of alcohol-involved homicide offending: a meta-analytic review. *Homicide Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088767913493629>

⁵ John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, [Gun Violence in the U.S. 2022: Examining the Burden Among Children & Teens](#) (2022).