



H.606 – Firearm Surrender Order Compliance Workgroup Recommendations (Act 64)
Charlie Gliserman, Policy Director
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Thank you for the invitation to speak in support of the amendment to H.606 to codify the Firearms Surrender Order Compliance Workgroup recommendations.

Firearm injury is the leading cause of domestic violence homicide in Vermont. In 2024, nine of the 14 domestic violence-related homicides involved a firearm. That is why long-standing state and federal laws are in place to protect victims at heightened risk of harm.

Under current law, certain criminal defendants, as well as individuals subject to civil relief from abuse orders, can be legally required to surrender their firearms for a specific period. However, there is no uniform process for carrying out or monitoring those court-ordered relinquishments. Lack of compliance with these conditions reflect administrative systems that are fragmented — and a grave safety concern for survivors.

Coming forward to request a relief from abuse order is difficult for the plaintiff-survivor. Asking the court to order firearms relinquishment can be even harder. It often reflects a survivor's true desperation and fear. It can sometimes reflect their trust that the system will protect them.

But too often, that trust is broken. A relief from abuse order is an important acknowledgment by the court that a survivor has been abused and that there is a risk of future abuse. These orders include court-ordered conditions needed to protect a survivor's safety. However, the order is only a piece of paper unless our systems ensure that the conditions are clearly understood by defendants, complied with, and enforced.

We see survivors harmed by defendants who were ordered to surrender firearms, but did not understand the order, did not abide by the order, or did not receive needed follow up to ensure compliance. Often, survivors experience extreme stress because they have limited information about whether firearms have been relinquished and do not know whether they are safe.

The provisions in this amendment are procedural improvements to ensure that our existing laws operate as intended. They are consensus recommendations among a diverse group of stakeholders in the Firearms Surrender Order Compliance Workgroup. We are deeply grateful to members for their good work, and in particular to Assistant Attorney General Carolyn Hanson, who chaired the workgroup.

These policy recommendations were developed through a thoughtful, collaborative process. We strongly support advancing them this legislative session.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with the committee today. I would be happy to answer any questions.