

Lisa Labella
9 Sally Ann Drive
Trumbull, CT 06611
203-452-5534

Testimony to the Judiciary Committee in support of Proposed SB 650, HB 6848, and HB 6962

I am writing to urge you to vote YES on SB 650, HB 6684, and HB 6962. These three bills will close loopholes in existing state law, making our families and communities safer from gun violence.

I have worked on improving gun safety in Connecticut for over 15 years. During this time, I have met family after family who have suffered the death of a loved one because a firearm was in the wrong hands. **Keeping guns away from those who may do harm with them must be our state's top priority.** All of these bills will help do that.

SB 650 and HB 6848 are necessary to protect women who are working to escape abusive relationships during their most vulnerable time; that is, immediately after they have requested a restraining order. The CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence has provided heartbreaking data stating that over 150 women have been killed in the 12-year period from 2000-2012 at the hands of a domestic partner, and the majority of them were killed by firearms.¹ SB 650 and HB 6848 can help reduce those numbers, by removing firearms during the “temporary” period; and data shows that doing this works. According to CCADV, “State laws prohibiting firearm possession by persons subject to restraining orders reduced rates of intimate partner homicide of women by 12 percent to 13 percent, decreasing overall intimate partner homicides by 10 percent.”²

Connecticut can and must close this loophole, and join the 20 states who already allow judges to remove firearms during temporary restraining orders.

Another loophole in current law is the failure of the state to hold accountable gun owners who do not take sufficient care to ensure that their weapons cannot be accessed by others. We know that the Sandy Hook massacre might not have happened had Mrs. Lanza kept her guns locked away from her troubled son. But beyond that, we read stories on social media almost every day reporting the injury or death of a loved one by a friend or family member - often not the gun owner - who “accidentally” shot the victim. Often no charges are filed, no one is accountable. How can that be?? We as a society must change the culture that allows this.

In addition, those of us active in gun violence prevention are told again and again that a major source of illegal firearms in Connecticut is firearms stolen from homes within the state. Those weapons often end up in our urban communities, and are involved in shootings and homicides. This could not happen if the firearms were locked security in a gun safe, and therefore could not be stolen. SB 6962 will be a strong motivator for gun owners to take all reasonable precautions in storing their firearms, and hold accountable those who do not.

It is important to note that these bills NOT keep law-abiding citizens from owning firearms. But they WILL make us safer because they WILL do more to prevent guns from being in the wrong hands.

A YES vote on these bills is a YES vote to protect our families and communities.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

¹Hartford Courant op-ed by CCADV: Temporary Restraining Order Should Mean No Guns, 1/6/2015, <http://www.ctcadv.org/index.php/press/media/hartford-courant-1615>

²Ibid.