Testimony in Support of HB 7218
AAC the Safe Storage of Firearms in the Home
Judiciary Committee, March 11, 2019

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafrstrom, ranking members Kissel and Rebbemas and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary:

On behalf of the Connecticut Public Health Association (CPHA) for which I serve as Chair of the Advocacy Committee, I am pleased to submit this testimony. CPHA’s mission is to provide leadership on health promotion and disease prevention through communication, advocacy, education, research, and professional and workforce development.

CPHA strongly endorses House Bill 7218 which would prohibit individuals from storing any firearms in their home if (1) they know that a minor is likely to gain access to it, (2) a resident of the home is ineligible to possess a firearm, or (3) a resident of the home poses a violent threat to him- or herself or others.

Roughly one third of U.S. homes with children have guns. In Connecticut, 40% of gun-owning households with children store their guns unlocked.\(^1\) Nearly 2 million children can access these loaded guns because they are not safely locked away in an adequate storage receptacle.\(^2\) Many parents do not take into serious consideration the potential fatality and risk that unsafe gun storage in the home poses. Gun violence is the second leading cause of death for children and teens in Connecticut.\(^3\)

Parents often underestimate the capabilities of their children, not realizing that even young toddlers are curious and capable enough to find and fire a gun. Among 3- to 4-year-olds, 25% have the two-finger trigger-pull strength of at least 10 pounds while 62.5% of guns require a pull strength of only 5 pounds.\(^4\) This perfectly sets the stage for disaster. Unintentional shootings were responsible for the deaths of 285 children in 2017 in the U.S.\(^5\) At least 22 unintentional shootings by children in 2019 have already occurred.\(^6\)

Your support for this bill would be a major step toward helping to reduce the chances of children being injured or killed by a gun. Guns stored in the home should be locked and unloaded, with ammunition kept separately. Inadequate storage of firearms in the home poses an eminent threat to public safety and we must respond to this threat. To protect our public safety, and particularly that of our children, we strongly urge the Committee to support HB 7218.

Thank you for allowing CPHA to submit this testimony. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me at RobertaFriedman@cpha.info or (860) 992-7749.

Roberta R. Friedman, ScM
Chair, CPHA Advocacy Committee

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\(^{3}\)"Gun Facts.”


\(^{5}\)"Guns in the Home.”