Testimony Supporting H.B. 7218: An Act Concerning the Safe Storage of Firearms in the Home
Marissa Justen, Yale School of Medicine Class of 2022
Judiciary Committee
March 11, 2019

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Senator Kissel, Representative Rebimbas, and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Marissa Justen, and I am writing in support of H.B. 7218. I currently reside in New Haven, and I am a medical student at the Yale School of Medicine. I am testifying as a private citizen, however, and as such my views do not reflect the views of the Yale School of Medicine.

Currently, it is estimated that 4.6 million minors in the US live with at least one loaded, unlocked firearm [1]. Additionally, 73% of children under the age of ten living in homes with guns know the location of their parents’ firearms, and 36% admit to having handled the weapon [2]. Every day, 8 children ages one through nineteen are killed by guns, and in 2014, firearm injuries were the third leading cause of death for children under the age of eighteen [3, 4].

Contrary to popular rhetoric from pro-firearm groups, it has been demonstrated that the presence of unlocked guns in the home increases the risk of unintentional gun injuries, especially suicides [5]. We know from past literature that suicide accounts for two thirds of all firearm related deaths, and a study from 2009 demonstrates that of those attempting to commit suicide, 47.6% report less than ten minutes between suicidal ideation and attempt [6, 7]. This highlights a critical time period in which restricted access to a loaded, unlocked gun can substantially reduce the number of firearm related deaths by creating a barrier to immediate means by which suicide can be attempted.

Connecticut’s current gun control policies contribute to the relatively low number of firearm deaths compared to the remainder of the country. Despite this, there were still 188 firearm deaths in 2017 [8]. I urge the committee to continue supporting progressive policy that limits the number of firearm related deaths in this state.

Though I am early in medical training, I’ve worked in a clinical setting for the past three years, including in the setting of Orthopedic surgery. During this time, I’ve seen the ways in which accidental shootings of family members by family members on the mistaken basis of self-defense has led to not only significant physical, but also emotional and psychological trauma. As a future physician, I hope to promote safety and well-being within my community, and I believe that passing H.B. 7218 would lend to this goal.

Sincerely,
Marissa Justen