March 11, 2019

Senator Gary Winfield
Representative Steven Stafstrom
Chairs
Joint Committee on Judiciary
Legislative Office Building, Room 2500
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: HB 7218 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SAFE STORAGE OF FIREARMS IN THE HOME

Dear Chairs Winfield and Stafstrom and Members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary:

The National Shooting Sports Foundation ("NSSF") is the trade association for America's firearms, ammunition, hunting, and recreational shooting sports industry. Its mission is to promote, protect and preserve hunting and the shooting sports. NSSF has a membership of more than 11,000 manufacturers, distributors, firearms retailers, shooting ranges, and sportsmen's organizations. Our manufacturer members make the firearms used by law-abiding Connecticut sportsmen, the U.S. military and law enforcement agencies throughout the state. This is to notify you of our opposition to HB 7218.

NSSF, launched Project ChildSafe in 1999 (prior to 2003 the program was called Project HomeSafe) as a nationwide initiative to promote firearms responsibility and provide safety education to all gun owners. While helping to prevent accidents among children is a focus, Project ChildSafe is intended to help adults practice greater firearm safety in the home to help prevent unauthorized access.

We have received strong endorsements from law enforcement agencies across the country who stress the effectiveness of programs like Project ChildSafe, which since 1999 has distributed more than 37 million free firearm safety kits across the country and in five U.S. territories. Thousands of law enforcement agencies, hunting and conservation groups, and firearms retailers already participate in Project ChildSafe and have been instrumental in expanding the reach of the program's safety. The statistics are the true barometer of the success of our program:

- Firearm-related fatalities in the U.S. have been decreasing since record-keeping began in 1903 — dramatically in the last 20 years, with 2014-2017 being the lowest years on record.

- From 2016 to 2017, accidental fatalities of all causes increased 5.3%, while unintentional fatalities related to firearms decreased 1.8 percent.

- Firearms are involved in fewer than ½ percent (0.3 percent) of all unintentional fatalities in the United States.
• From 2007-2017, unintentional firearm related fatalities declined by 20.7 percent while firearms ownership grew by an estimated 38 percent.

• Over the last two decades, the number of unintentional fatalities involving firearms has dropped by 50.5 percent.

Government Supported Research
A Government Accountability Office (GAO) report has confirmed what we know to be true. The distribution of free gun locks helps to increase the use of safe storage practices. Having doctors talk to parents about safe storage and firearms in the homes does not change the parents’ behavior. In the words of the GAO authors:

“Our review of the studies relating to safe storage approaches (device distribution and physician consultation) found that providing a free locking device to study participants influenced behavior to store firearms more safely and physician consultation generally did not.”

We know this of course, having seen through the undeniable success of NSSF’s Project ChildSafe® program. And we are determined to see the downward trend in firearms-related accidents continue to decline. The government researchers analyzed the results of 12 different studies. Of these, about half (5) tested the impact of distributing locking devices (including cable locks, trigger locks or gun safes/cabinets). According to the GAO, the results are clear: “All five studies found that gun owners given a locking device began using the device to store their firearms more safely compared to a control group or based on surveys given before and after receiving the device.”

For example, one study involved a national randomized trial of pediatric practices. Some of the 137 practices distributed educational materials and cable locks to some parents and not to others. The GAO describes the conclusion as, “After 6 months, researchers contacted participants who had received the educational materials and cable locks and found that they reported an increase (from 59 percent to 68 percent) in use of the cable locks since they received them. Over the same period, the percentage of respondents in the control group, who did not receive these devices, reported that their use of cable locks decreased from 64 percent to 52 percent.” Similar results were reported in studies that did not rely on self-reporting to evaluate effectiveness, rather that followed up with unannounced visits to observe the change in storage behaviors.

Based on GAO’s own research, more funding should be directed to funding the distribution of free locking devices and educational material, rather than being poured into ineffective gun control measures masquerading as safety programs.

Not only is NSSF committed to firearms safety, but also our firearms manufacturers who voluntarily include a gun lock with the sale of every new firearm at retail. Our industry is committed to the safe storage of firearms and making sure prohibited persons do not gain access to firearms.

Rather than layering another level of regulation on law-abiding hobbyists and businesses, lawmakers should seek enforcement of the existing stringent laws and regulations.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Jake McGuigan
Managing Director State Affairs
GUN STORAGE FOR YOUR LIFESTYLE

As a gun owner, you can choose from multiple options for safely storing and protecting your firearms when they’re not in use. Use this guide to determine which mechanism best suits your lifestyle, priorities and environment.

A RANGE OF OPTIONS

**CABLE LOCK**
Price Range: $10-$50
A cable lock can be used on most firearms, allows for quick access in an emergency and offers security from theft. The cable runs through the barrel or action of a firearm to prevent it from being accidently fired, requiring either a key or combination to unlock it.

**GUN CASE**
Price Range: $10-$150
For those looking to conceal, protect or legally transport a registered firearm, a gun case is an affordable solution available in a variety of materials including plastic, fabric or metal. Be sure to lock it with an external device for added security.

**LOCK BOX**
Price Range: $25-$350
With integrated lock, storage boxes provide reliable protection for firearms, and allow gun owners to legally transport them outside of their home.

**ELECTRONIC LOCK BOX**
Price Range: $50-$350
Electronic lock boxes are an effective way to store or legally transport firearms, and they also prevent theft since only the person with the code can access the contents. Some electric lock boxes are specially designed for quick access to stored firearms.

**FULL SIZE AND BIOMETRIC GUN SAFE**
Price Range: $200-$2,500
A gun safe protects its contents from the elements and allows owners to safely store multiple firearms in one place. Gun safes of all sizes are now available with biometric options to ensure only certain people have access.

PLEASE HELP PREVENT ACCIDENTS, STORE FIREARMS RESPONSIBLY.

These are just a few of the storage options available to firearm owners. For the greatest level of security, consider using a combination of safety mechanisms and educate family members about handling firearms properly.

To learn more about firearm safety, visit ProjectChildSafe.org