TO: Chairs Winfield & Stafstrom
   Joint Committee on Judiciary
FROM: Angela Montgomery—Guilford, CT
   Connecticut chapter—Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America
   Support for H.B. 7218
DATE: March 11, 2019

Dear Chairs and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Angela Montgomery and I am a Guilford resident, pediatrician, and mother of two young children. I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Connecticut chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America in support of House Bill 7218. This bill has been carefully written to close loopholes in our current safe storage requirements that continue to place our children and communities at risk and make it difficult to hold firearm owners accountable when they store their firearms unsafely.

Moms Demand Action is a grassroots organization that is part of Everytown for Gun Safety, the largest gun violence prevention organization in the country. Here in CT, Moms Demand Action represents thousands of Connecticut residents who are fighting for public safety measures that protect our communities and our children from gun violence and preventable gun deaths while still respecting Second Amendment rights. I joined Moms Demand Action in the days following Ethan Song’s death, recognizing that I owed it to my own children, as well as to all of yours, to do more to prevent unintentional gun deaths like Ethan’s.

Strong safe storage laws are needed to prevent unintentional shootings and to mitigate the risk of suicide by children. An estimated 4.6 million American children live in households with at least one loaded, unlocked firearm. Since 2015 and as of March 8 this year, there have been at least 1,071 unintentional shootings in the United States, with hundreds resulting in preventable deaths. Furthermore, when American children die by firearm suicide, over 80 percent use a weapon belonging to a family member. By restricting unauthorized access to all firearms, responsible storage laws work to prevent these types of tragedies before they occur and allow law enforcement to hold firearm owners accountable when a child does access an unsafely stored firearm and harm results.

As a mother of two and a pediatrician, this issue is personal for me, as it is for the members of Moms Demand Action. As Ethan’s death proves, an unloaded gun can be just as dangerous as one that is loaded. We cannot risk repeating the tragedy that unfolded in Guilford in January of last year when the evidence is clear that responsible firearm storage reduces childhood firearm injuries and deaths. We must send a strong message to all gun owners that they will be held accountable for tragedies that occur as a result of the unsafe storage of their firearms. Connecticut has been a national leader on gun violence prevention. By passing this law strengthening our responsible storage law, we will continue as leaders in these efforts to keep
our children and communities safe from gun violence and preventable gun deaths. For Ethan, and for all our children, I urge you to pass H.B. 7218 and thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela Montgomery
CT Shoreline Local Group Leader
Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America