JUDICIARY COMMITTEE HEARINGS
MARCH 11, 2019
Testified before the Committee at 17:30

Members of the Judiciary committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak here in the hopes that the State of Connecticut improves and strengthens its gun safety laws.

My name is Steven Wolf. I am an emergency physician and am Chairman of Emergency Medicine at St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center here in Hartford. We are a Level 1 Trauma center and we see the majority of the gun violence in the City. I am a licensed gun owner and I respect the 2nd Amendment. I am advocating mandating the safe storage of guns both in homes (HB No. 7218) and in cars (HB No. 7223). Nothing I am advocating restricts anyone’s right to legally own firearms.

From June to December 2017 (6 months), the St. Francis ER had 36-gunshot patients. From January to December 2018 (12 months), we received 62 gunshot victims: a total of almost 100 patients.
While survival has steadily improved due to advances in emergency and trauma care, the carnage and human tragedy of these incidents leaves a wake of destruction that spans generations; it destroys families, invokes permanent post-traumatic stress in all involved, and creates a financial burden that society has to shoulder. The vicious cycle continues through constant violent retaliation in the community.

One of the major ways guns enter the urban environment (besides the trafficking from other states) is the theft of unsecured guns from private homes, often in the suburbs, as well as from cars (about 2,600 guns were stolen in CT from 2012-2015).

Gun violence isn’t found just on the streets. In 2014, suicide was the second-leading cause of death among youths ages 13 to 17 years, with 1,297 suicides reported, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A firearm was used in 42% of those fatalities.
Unsecured guns, loaded or unloaded (unloaded is irrelevant if the ammunition is not secured as well) become an easy solution to someone who is depressed and suicidal. Pulling the trigger is far easier than planning and carrying out an overdose or jumping off a bridge.

Among suicide victims requiring hospital treatment, suicide attempts with a firearm are much more deadly than attempts by jumping or drug poisoning — 90 percent die compared to 34 percent and 2 percent, respectively.

About 90 percent of those that survive a suicide attempt do not go on to die by suicide.

Removing the ability to impulsively grab a gun and "end it" would save many lives. The same goes for someone who has homicidal tendencies; was just fired from their job or had an argument with someone. Grabbing an unsecured gun allows for a possibly transient moment not to pass and gives easy access to devastating opportunity.

Finally, the safe storage of guns in homes with children and teenagers could avoid hundreds of accidentally tragic death. Safes are
not the perfect solution. They can be compromised with some effort, but they are certainly far better than a cardboard box or lying on a shelf. There simply is no rational explanation that can justify keeping unsecured firearms within reach of children. Ethan Song, killed last year is just one of hundreds of horrible examples of this.

Every winter flu season we report the sad deaths of pediatric patients who have succumbed to the flu. The totals make the national headlines multiple times throughout the season. Accidental child gun deaths, that total far more, gets far less attention.

In closing, as I said, I am a licensed gun owner. Everything proposed is just common sense gun safety rules that I myself follow. Nothing restricts ownership. The second amendment is alive and well. Gun ownership comes with responsibility to keep everyone around those guns safe.

Thank you
C. Steven Wolf, MD FACEP
Chairman, Department of Emergency Medicine
Assistant Professor, Emergency Medicine
University of Connecticut School of Medicine
Quinnipiac University Frank H. Netter School of Medicine
St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center
114 Woodland Street
Hartford, CT 06105
Phone: 860-714-6107
Fax: 860-714-8046