

Testimony in support of H.B. 7218, H.B. 7219 and H.B. 7223

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

My name is Karen Edwards, MD, MPH, and I am from Stamford. I am a member of Women on Watch of Stamford and volunteer for Connecticut Against Gun Violence. I am a parent and a pediatrician (retired) with a degree in Public Health.

I am testifying in support of H.B. 7218, An Act Concerning the Safe Storage of Firearms in the Home, H.B. 7223 An Act Concerning the Safe Storage of Firearms in Vehicles, and H.B. 7219, An Act Concerning Ghost Guns

I am a gun safety advocate because, from my perspectives as a parent, a physician, and a public health professional, I am convinced by the evidence that shows that many needless deaths of children and teens (through accidental discharge, suicide and gun violence) can be easily prevented without infringing on the rights of law-abiding citizens who choose to keep guns in their homes and vehicles.

The scope of deaths in children and teens due to firearms is staggering. Every day 8 children ages one through nineteen are killed by guns (murder, suicide, or unintentional discharge). (<http://www.bradycampaign.org/key-gun-violence-statistics>). Firearm injuries are the third leading cause of death for children one to seventeen years, and, in 2014-2015, accounted for 10% of deaths in this age group. In 2015, 14% of deaths of children and youth aged one to nineteen were due to firearm injuries, meaning that 1 out of every 7 deaths in children aged 1 to 19 were because of a gunshot. (Commentary. *Pediatrics*, July 2017, VOLUME 140 / ISSUE 1; <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/140/1/e20171300.short>).

The watchword of pediatricians and public health professionals is "prevention;" surely we should prevent as many of these unnecessary deaths as possible through commonsense safety strategies.

Specific to -H.B. 7218, An Act Concerning the Safe Storage of Firearms in the Home, H.B. 7223 An Act Concerning the Safe Storage of Firearms in Vehicles.

These commonsense laws hold gun owners responsible for securing firearms away from young children who do not know that guns can kill, from teens at risk of committing suicide or using the firearm against another, and from others who would steal an unsecured firearm. Implementation of safe storage laws is supported by common sense and by research evidence showing that safe storage reduces childhood gun injuries and death. (COMMITTEE COUNCIL ON INJURY, VIOLENCE, AND POISON PREVENTION EXECUTIVE Firearm-Related Injuries Affecting the Pediatric Population. *Pediatrics*. 2012;130; e1416; <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/130/5/e1416>) With today's technology providing gun locks that allow owners access within seconds, there can no longer be any reason to neglect enforcing this important preventive

strategy. With the right to gun ownership comes the responsibility to securely store the firearms.

Specific to H.B. 7219 to regulate ghost and 3D printed guns. These will ban guns without serial numbers and regulate those sold as "do it yourself" (DIY) kits known as "ghost guns" or that are homemade or made with a 3D plastic printer. These guns are untraceable and undetectable. There is no valid argument for anyone to possess unregistered, untraceable, undetectable firearms.

The frame or "lower receiver" is the essential part of a gun used by federal law to define what is considered to be a "firearm." However, manufacturers have evaded state and federal gun laws by marketing unfinished "80-percent" lower receivers that are easily available online (see ghostguns.com). The kits instruct users how to make DIY guns by drilling holes and slots and finishing the assembly with other parts. 3D printed guns are made entirely from plastic using commercially available 3D printers.

Ghost guns carry no serial numbers, are untraceable and require no background check to purchase. Individuals prohibited from possessing firearms have used homemade assault weapons in mass shootings and attacks on law enforcement. Concerning "ghost guns," the U.S. Government Accountability Office reports "an emerging reliance by criminal organizations on this source of weapons." The existence and availability of such guns should concern us all.

Ghost guns are turning up in Connecticut. In 2019 a Southington man was convicted for trying to sell a ghost gun on armslist.com, advertising it as "No serial. Completed from 80 lower. No paperwork." In 2018 a Willimantic teen was arrested for selling multiple ghost guns, telling an undercover agent that demand was so high, he couldn't keep up. The U. S. Congress has no plan to ban or otherwise regulate ghost guns. Let's do this in Connecticut.

I strongly support H.B. 7218, H.B. 7219, and HB 7223 and urge you to favorably vote these bills out of the Judiciary Committee.

Sincerely,

Karen Edwards MD MPH
Stamford CT