

March 7, 2019

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

My name is Deborah Pauls, I live in Stamford and I am a License Clinical Social Worker with a psychotherapy private practice.

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, H.B. 7219, An Act concerning Ghost Guns.

I fight every day to keep my clients alive. Many of them suffer with various forms of anxiety and depression. I've learned that their moods can shift quickly. They can go from a tolerable experience of anxiety and/or depression to the depth of despair in a very short time and they can also be brought back from the brink of despair in an equally short time. Not having a gun loaded and readily available to them will make the difference between death and moving forward to a productive life. This is especially true of young people whose family member owns a gun which is kept in either the home or a car without safeguards.

Suicides account for nearly two-thirds of the gun deaths in the U.S. each year. About 22,000 people took their own life with a gun in 2015.

Researchers have found that strong firearm laws in a state are associated with lower rates of suicide by gun in that state -- and lower suicide rates overall, suggesting that people do not just find another way to kill themselves if the first attempt fails. This is true regardless of the strength of gun laws in neighboring states.

The researchers also say that most firearm suicides involve people who own a gun or a family member of a gun owner, and likely involve legally-purchased firearms obtained for other purposes than suicide.

Each of these three bills **builds in a little more time for the impulse to pass**, for another breath to be taken, for rationality to enter in. Each bill makes it harder for the person to become another suicide victim. Across the world suicide studies have shown that when lethal means are made less available, suicide rates decline. In the U.S., **firearms are the most lethal and the most common method of suicide. More people who die by suicide, use a gun, than all other methods combined.**

Consider these facts from the Harvard's School of Public Health:

- Many suicide attempts occur with little planning during a short-term crisis.
- Intent isn't all that determines whether an attempter lives or dies; means also matter
- 90% of attempters who survive do NOT go on to die by suicide later as the method they chose was less lethal than a gun. (but attempters of suicide by gun do not have this second or third chance at life)

- Access to firearms is a risk factor for suicide
- Firearms used in youth suicide usually belong to a parent.

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

Sincerely,

Deborah Pauls, LCSW
Stamford, CT

Harvard School of Public Health
<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/magazine/guns-and-suicide/>

American Journal of Public Health
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4566524/>

Azrael, Deborah, and Matthew Miller, "Reducing Suicide Without Affecting Underlying Mental Health: Theoretical Underpinnings and a Review of the Evidence Base Linking the Availability of Lethal Means and Suicide," in Rory C. O'Connor and Jane Pirkis, eds., *The International Handbook of Suicide Prevention*, 2nd ed., Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley and Sons, 2016.