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**Testimony Supporting H.B. 7218: An Act Concerning the Safe Storage of Firearms in the Home  
and Testimony Supporting H.B. 7219: An Act Concerning Ghost Guns**

Karen Siegel, M.P.H.  
Judiciary Committee  
March 11, 2019

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Senator Kissel, Representative Rebimbas, and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am submitting testimony today on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based child advocacy organization working to ensure that all Connecticut children have an equitable opportunity to achieve their full potential.

Death from gun violence constitutes a public health crisis in the United States where gun-related homicide and suicide rank among the top five causes of injury-related death.<sup>1</sup> Compared to other states, Connecticut has relatively low numbers of firearm deaths; yet, 188 Connecticut residents still died from gun-related incidents in 2017 alone.<sup>2</sup> Analysis of Connecticut's gun control policies demonstrates that policy change at the state level is partly responsible for this relatively low rate of firearm deaths.<sup>3</sup> Strict firearm policies have proven effective at decreasing injury and loss of life.<sup>4</sup> Connecticut's success in curtailing gun deaths to date and ongoing firearm-related fatalities suggest that there is more work to do to safeguard the health of Connecticut's residents.

**Testimony Supporting H.B. 7218: An Act Concerning the Safe Storage of Firearms in the Home**

**We support this effort to ensure that firearms are stored safely in homes where minors are present.**

A growing body of research in cognitive and psychosocial development shows evidence that most human brains are still developing until age 25, particularly the frontal lobes which are associated with advanced decision making, long-term thinking, and regulation of emotions and impulses.<sup>5</sup> Although young adults have the same cognitive capacities (i.e.: verbal fluency, resistance to interference in working memory, memory span, and overall cognitive ability) as mature adults, their ability to place that cognition into a social context is slower to mature.<sup>6</sup> The fact that people within this age group are still developing suggests the need to pay special attention to how deadly weapons are stored when teenagers live in the home and are likely to bring friends to the home.

**Testimony Supporting H.B. 7219: An Act Concerning Ghost Guns**

We urge the committee to **support this restriction on untraceable firearms.** The cities of Bridgeport and Stamford have recently passed bans on ghost guns. Prohibiting the unlicensed manufacture of firearms is a common sense public safety measure.

Evidence shows that state laws influence the ways in which firearms are obtained and sold; this holds true even in small states and even in states with some degree of ongoing illegal or "black market" activity. For example, permit-to-purchase firearm licensing reduces the rate of legally purchased guns that are diverted to criminals, reduces the rates of gun-related homicide and suicide, and is associated with lower risk of being shot in the line of duty for police officers.<sup>7</sup> According to a complex statistical model adjusting for differences between states, Connecticut's permit laws successfully reduced firearm-related deaths by 40 percent over 10 years.<sup>8</sup> While it is impossible to achieve complete prohibition of any human behavior,

analyses of existing gun policies demonstrate a significant impact on the rate of homicide. This evidence suggests that closing loopholes that might allow for the assembly or printing of gun parts could prevent deaths related to such weapons. Therefore, we support H.B. 7219, which would prohibit unlicensed assembly, sale, or transfer of an untraceable firearm.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify supporting H.B.7218 and H.B. 7219. I can be reached with any questions at ksiegel@ctvoices.org or at 203-498-4240, ext. 120.

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<sup>1</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016). "10 Leading Causes of Injury Deaths by Age Group Highlighting Unintentional Injury Deaths, United States—2015." Retrieved from: [https://www.cdc.gov/injury/images/lccharts/leading\\_causes\\_of\\_injury\\_deaths\\_unintentional\\_injury\\_2015\\_\\_1050w760h.gif](https://www.cdc.gov/injury/images/lccharts/leading_causes_of_injury_deaths_unintentional_injury_2015__1050w760h.gif)

<sup>2</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Firearm Mortality by State." Available at: [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/firearm\\_mortality/firearm.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/firearm_mortality/firearm.htm)

<sup>3</sup>Rudolph, K., Stuart, E., Vernick, J. & Webster, D. (2015). "Association Between Connecticut's Permit-to-Purchase Handgun Law and Homicides." *American Journal of Public Health*. 105:8. Doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2015.302703

<sup>4</sup>Jehan, F., Pandit, V., O'Keeffe, T. et al. (2018). "The Burden of Firearm Violence in the United States: Stricter Laws Result in Safer States." *Journal of Injury and Violence Research*. 10:1. Doi: 10.5249/jivr.v10i1.951

<sup>5</sup>Steinberg, L. (2009). Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 5(1), 459-485. doi:10.1146/annurev.clinpsy.032408.153603.

<sup>6</sup>Steinberg, L., Cauffman, E., Woolard, J., Graham, S., & Banich, M. (2009). Are adolescents less mature than adults?: Minors' access to abortion, the juvenile death penalty, and the alleged APA "flip-flop." *American Psychologist*, 64(7), 583- 594. doi:10.1037/a0014763

<sup>7</sup>Center for Gun Policy and Research at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. (2016). "Permit-to-Purchase Licensing for Handguns." Retrieved from: <https://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/johnshopkins-center-for-gun-policy-and-research/publications/PTP-policy-brief.pdf> and Fleegler, E., Lee, L, Monuteaux, M. et al. (2013). "Firearm Legislation and Firearm-Related Fatalities in the United States." *Journal of the American Medical Association*. 173:9. Doi: 10.1001/jamainternmed.2013.1286 and

Lee, K., Fleegler, F., Farrell, C., et al. (2017). "Firearm Laws and Firearm Homicides: A Systematic Review." *JAMA Internal Medicine*. 177:1. Doi: 10.1001/jamainternmed.2016.7051.

<sup>8</sup>Rudolph, K., Stuart, E., Vernick, J. & Webster, D. (2015). "Association Between Connecticut's Permit-to-Purchase Handgun Law and Homicides." *American Journal of Public Health*. 105:8. Doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2015.302703