

March 6, 2019

Dear Legislators and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Julia Taborsak and I live in New Milford, Connecticut. I'm a public school teacher, a mother of two, and an active community volunteer. I'm writing today to add my own voice to those calling for support for both HB-7218 and HB-7219, two important gun safety measures that will help make our kids and our communities safer and reduce the epidemic of gun violence that has devastated far too many families in our state. Both of these measures include reasonable regulations that enhance public safety without infringing on the rights of responsible gun owners, and they continue to build upon the path of progress that has made Connecticut a leader on gun safety issues and gun violence prevention.

To begin with HB-7218: AN ACT CONCERNING THE SAFE STORAGE OF FIREARMS IN THE HOME, this bill would require the safe storage of all firearms, whether loaded or unloaded, in a home with a minor under eighteen years of age, effectively closing the loopholes in Connecticut's current safe storage law that do not require unloaded firearms to be secured, and don't require loaded guns to be secured if the children in the home are more than 15 years of age. Given the fact that suicide is the third leading cause of death among 15 to 19 year olds, and the risk of teen suicide increases when there is a gun in the home and that the rate of firearm suicide among children and teens has increased 61% over the past decade, this is clearly a responsible and necessary change. Easy access to unsecured firearms is a deciding factor in a majority of unintentional child gun deaths. These tragedies are entirely preventable when states adopt policies that make it harder for children to gain access to unsecured firearms.

"Ethan's Law," so named to honor the memory of 15 year old Ethan Song who was senselessly killed by an unsecured gun, provides much needed guidance and accountability for safe storage of firearms in homes where children could gain access if guns and ammunition aren't safely stored- something any truly responsible gun owner should support. Child access prevention measures like this one have been effective in other states, and shown to significantly reduce youth suicides and accidental shootings by kids and teens.

This is something that helps protect children. We hope you can see your way to support and pass this important legislation. As a state, we have done much to improve public safety and prevent tragedy in our communities. We've enacted meaningful laws that increase penalties for drunk drivers who are arrested with a minor in the vehicle. Ethan's Law does much the same thing- it holds individuals accountable for reckless

behavior that places kids in harm's way and can have deadly consequences. We need this law on our books. It can literally save lives - like Ethan's.

Similarly, HB-7219, AN ACT CONCERNING GHOST GUNS aims to ban guns without serial numbers and regulate those which are sold in a form requiring the purchaser to finish assembly or that are homemade or 3-D printed. These guns are not only unregulated, but virtually untraceable and require no background check, so they can easily end up in the hands of individuals who pose a serious -even deadly-danger to themselves and others. This is a clear and present danger, and one that requires quick and courageous action. We have a responsibility to our children, our schools, our communities, and our state to ensure that dangerous people, including criminals and domestic abusers, cannot bypass the background check system and current regulations by building homemade, do-it-yourself, untraceable, deadly weapons. In the interest of public safety and ethical, responsible action, please pass these bills.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Julia M. Taborsak