

Greetings Representatives and Senators – Chair(person):

My name is Kristine Witherill. I am an executive member of Connecticut Citizen's Defense League. I serve the organization as the membership coordinator. I am a veteran of the United States Air Force, as are both of my parents. I married a former Marine, and two of my 5 children have grown up and joined the Army. I currently live in Ledyard, where I bought my first house.

I have provided, as a summary, the bills I have come to testify in support of (SB940 and HB5227) and those I oppose (SB60, HB7218, HB7219, and HB7223); with much of my allotted time focusing on the ones I am more passionate about or can provide insight.

I want to start this part of my testimony by stating that my heart goes out to the Song family. A young man's life was tragically cut short. I lost my cousin about 2 ½ months before his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. We were cousins raised as siblings for several years. He was killed by a jealous lover when he displayed disinterest on continuing a relationship when she informed him she was pregnant. She went into her father's gun safe, selected a 12 gauge shotgun, and when my cousin tried to call her bluff, she pulled the trigger.

With that being said, when HB7218 was being drafted, firearm advocacy groups were – admittedly – not consulted. We would have had provided insight which would have been invaluable to potentially lifesaving legislation. During a panel style discussion this past Thursday, hosted by a Jewish synagogue in Chester, CT, education was brought up as a deterrent to further loss of life. When looking at accidents in the household involving a firearm, accidents are most often due to lack of proper handling and the lack of firearms education not proper storage; hence the lack of criminal charges sought against the gun owner. Education is the key to keeping our children safe, not reactive and punitive legislation.

In addition to attempting to regulate the storage of firearms in our home, HB7223 is attempting to regulate the storage in our vehicles. As a responsible gun owner, I very rarely leave my firearm in my car; and never with the car unlocked. The current law is enough, in my belief, to have a safe assumption of a secure firearm. Also, this bill – as with SB60 – can lead to racial profiling. As a white woman in Ledyard, if I were to leave the cover of my vehicle, travel to the trunk, remove my firearm from its holster, and transfer it to a safe, no one would think about calling me in as a threat. I fear this would not be the case of a man of color in more urban area trying to secure his firearm before walking into his local post office.

Kristine Witherill  
Ledyard, CT

Please see below for my opposition/support of the bills being presented in the Judiciary Committee on 11 March 2019.

**OPPOSED:**

SB60: I categorically oppose this bill especially with the removal of the "reasonable suspicion" clause. This bill is too like the "Stop and Frisk" bills which have been shown to promote racial profiling. For example, I am a white woman from Ledyard. If I am walking down the street while open carrying, it is very unlikely I will be ho asked to show my permit; or even have the police called.

HB7218 Ethan's Bill: However horrific the tragedy that led to this young man's life being cut short and have led the Songs to work with gun control legislators and activists, I oppose this bill. HB7218 is too "one size fits all" and the conditions inside the home and the surrounding environment are completely ignored.

HB7219: The ATF is the federal governing agency over firearms. As such, they already have rules and regulations. All of these said regulations were thought up by people who know more than everyone coming up with the language of this bill.

HB7219: If my vehicle is mine enough to tax me on it, it should be enough to secure my valuables. I would consider my firearm secure in a locked vehicle. There is also the transport from holster to safe when leaving my vehicle. This bill will be another one with potential racial profiling elements. As a white woman, no one would pay any mind if I exit my vehicle, walk to the back of my vehicle, unholster my firearm, and deposit into a safe. However, I would not be handling my firearm responsibly by brandishing it in public.

**SUPPORT:**

SB940: This bill would allow pistol permit holders to carry in state parks and forests. So called "gun-free zones" are nonsensical boundaries that only disarm law-abiding citizens while doing nothing to hinder criminals.

HB5227: This bill would prevent towns from enacting their own gun control regulations, making it easier for law-abiding citizens to follow the law. This would ensure that all Connecticut residents would have equal rights regardless of which town they live in, regardless of demographics or the political leaning of their representatives.

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