

To: Chair Craven and members of the House Judiciary Committee

From: Amy Herlihy, Volunteer with RI Moms Demand Action

Re: **Support:** H 7373, H 7217

Date: March 13, 2024

My name is Amy Herlihy, I'm a volunteer with RI Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense and I live in Rep Boylan's district. Tonight I am writing in support of H 7373, which is sponsored by Rep Caldwell, and would require all firearms to be stored securely when not under the control of their owner or another authorized user and promote efforts to educate gun owners, parents, and students about the benefits of secure gun storage.

If you have guns hidden carefully away in your home, you might think that your children don't know where they are or won't be able to find them. Well, I am here to tell you, you are mistaken. My dad had 2 guns casually stored in my home- a pistol in a box in the attic and an antique long gun under a bed. My siblings and I played with those guns when my parents were out, and luckily, neither of those guns had bullets. I cringe now just thinking about what could have happened as we experimented with pulling those triggers.

What could have happened to me and my siblings- what happens when children gain access to a firearm and harm themselves or someone else- are completely preventable tragedies if guns are securely stored. More than 80 percent of child gun suicides involve a gun belonging to a family member and three-quarters of school shooters acquired their firearm from the home of a parent or close relative.¹ From 2015 to 2023, there were more than 3,200 unintentional shootings by children, resulting in more than 1,200 killed and more than 2,000 people wounded nationally.²

Firearms are the leading cause of death for American children and teens and I refuse to accept this fact as normal.³ Preventing child gun deaths should be a top priority of this committee and our state. Requiring firearm owners to securely store guns in their homes and vehicles is a common sense means to keep kids safe from gun violence in our homes and schools. We all deserve to live in communities that are safe from gun violence and updating our Secure Gun Storage law in Rhode Island is an important step to get us there.

Specifically, I urge you to prioritize support for:

- H 7373 (Caldwell), which would require require all firearms to be stored securely when not under the control of their owner or another authorized user and promote efforts to educate gun owners, parents, and students about the benefits of secure gun storage; and
- H 7217 (Knight), which would prohibit the future manufacture, sale, transfer,

¹ Renee M. Johnson et al., "Who Are the Owners of Firearms Used in Adolescent Suicides?," *Suicide & Life-Threatening Behavior* 40, no. 6 (2010): 609–11, <https://doi.org/10.1521/suli.2010.40.6.609>; National Threat Assessment Center, "Protecting America's Schools: A US Secret Service Analysis of Targeted School Violence," US Secret Service, Department of Homeland Security, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2U7vnwa>.

² Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, "#NotAnAccident Index," accessed March 11, 2024, <https://everytownresearch.org/maps/notanaccident/>.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. WONDER Online Database, Underlying Cause of Death, Injury Mechanism & All Other Leading Causes. Data from 2021. Children and teenagers aged 1 to 19.

purchase, and possession of assault weapons, while providing a pathway for current owners of assault weapons to keep the ones they currently have.

These bills can help reduce the spread of exceptionally deadly, military-style firearms – which are commonplace in mass shootings – in our communities and also save lives by preventing firearm suicide, gun theft, unintentional shootings, and unauthorized access to guns by helping ensure that secure storage becomes the norm across Rhode Island.

Please pass common-sense gun safety bills out of committee and to the House floor with a recommendation for passage.

Sincerely,
Amy Herlihy