



March 13, 2024

Chair Robert E. Craven, Sr.
House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Support for H-7373 – Safe Storage of Firearms

Dear Chair Craven and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

The Rhode Island Chapter of the National Organization for Women (RI NOW) supports H-7373 to require the safe storage of firearms.

While incidents occur daily involving deaths and life threatening injuries caused by the proliferation of all sorts of guns in our state and throughout the country, this legislation presents an opportunity for us to make a real, common sense difference to reduce the number of these tragedies. The difference starts at home.

The Safe Storage bill requires a firearm that is not being carried to be either stored in a locked container or be equipped with a lock or safety device that renders it inoperable by anyone other than its owner or other lawfully authorized users.

Penalties logically increase for failure to adhere to such safety requirements where a child (under age 18) or another unauthorized person gains access to a firearm, and further if the child or unauthorized person harms themselves or another person. Possible exceptions are spelled out such as if the gun was obtained by illegal entry, used by said child or person in self-defense, and whether or not an accidental death or injury of a child was due to grossly negligent behavior of a parent or guardian.

Licensed dealers must provide a trigger lock device with all guns they sell. The Department of Health, State Police, and Department of Education will develop detailed informational and bilingual brochures for gun dealers and for schools to provide to customers and students to further awareness of risks and responsibilities of owning and storing firearms.

Many law abiding citizens say they own a gun or guns primarily for home safety and their own personal protection. Unfortunately, what we hear most about are the guns that are stolen, used in mass shootings, suicides, domestic partner abuse, or accidental shootings. These are all too easily acquired by a child or someone who does not legally own the gun, because the guns' whereabouts are known or obvious, the guns are available, unlocked, and often loaded.

54% of gun owners don't lock all of their guns safely. In another context, that means 4.6 million children in the US live in a home with at least one unlocked and loaded firearm in the house. Law abiding and responsible gun ownership includes storing one's guns safely.

RI NOW supports passage of H-7373 and we strongly urge you to pass it out of committee and bring it to the floor for a vote.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,



Lesley Bunnell
President
RI NOW



Giona Picheco
Legislative Chair
RI NOW

With support from Jessie Kingston, RI NOW member.

Rhode Island National Organization for Women (RI NOW) is a membership-based advocacy organization with hundreds of members and supporters throughout the state of Rhode Island. Our mission is to take action to bring women into full participation in all aspects of public and private life without experiencing barriers based on gender. Our key issue areas include economic equity, ending violence against women, reproductive health and justice, 2SLGBTQIA+ civil rights, and ending racism.