



February 13, 2024

RI Department of Health
Three Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908-5097

TTY: 771
www.health.ri.gov

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr.
Chair
House Committee on Judiciary
State House
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903

RE: H 7373 – An Act Relating to Criminal Offenses – Weapons

Dear Chair Craven:

Please accept this letter in support of H 7373, legislation that would require the safe storage of firearms and would provide civil and criminal penalties for violations. This bill would also add rifles and shotguns to the types of firearms that require a trigger lock to be included with purchase. Firearms dealers would be required to post informational signs regarding safe storage. H 7373 would take effect upon passage.

The proposed legislation strives to prevent intentional and accidental injury by reducing access to lethal means through the safe storage of firearms. H 7373 is especially aimed at preventing access for those unauthorized to own a firearm who have suicidal or homicidal ideation or intention and limiting access of youth. Trigger locks protect against accidental discharges.

According to the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH's) Rhode Island Violent Death Reporting System (RIVDRS), 435 violent deaths involving firearms were reported in RIVDRS during 2011-2020. Of these deaths, 287 were deaths by suicide, 143 were homicides, and five were undetermined intent. The overall burden of firearm deaths in Rhode Island has remained consistent over time. Firearm suicide deaths have increased from 136 during 2011-2015 to 151 during 2016-2020.

Unlocked guns pose clear safety risks, particularly to children up to age 18. When guns are not stored safely or securely and they are accessible to unsupervised minors, the risk of death or injury significantly increases. A 2019 study published in the *Journal of American Medicine* found that doing more to encourage adults who live in homes with youths to store firearms safely may prevent up to 32% of firearm deaths. The study's authors noted fewer than one in three homes with youth and firearms follow the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations to store all household firearms locked and unloaded.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Utpala Bandy" followed by a flourish and the word "for".

Utpala Bandy, MD, MPH
Interim Director

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Judiciary
The Honorable Justine A. Caldwell
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy
