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April 8, 2026

The Honorable Carol Hagan McEntee, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary
State House
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903

RE: H 7636 -- An Act Relating to Health and Safety -- Suicide Prevention—Voluntary Firearms Restrictions Act

Dear Chair McEntee:

Please accept this letter of support with a small, suggested amendment for H 7636, legislation that would create a process for an individual to voluntarily be either temporarily or indefinitely added to a list restricting their rights to purchase or possess firearms. The individual may also request removal from the restricted list and all individual records related to the person's inclusion on the list would be destroyed and not subject to the *Access to Public Records Act*.

As the Director of the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH), I am deeply concerned about the adverse effects of firearm-related injuries and violence in both Rhode Island and in our nation. Gun violence is a public health crisis. In Rhode Island from 2018-2022, approximately 26% of Rhode Islanders who died by suicide involved firearms. Additionally, among males age 25-64, approximately 30% died by suicide due to firearms. This is the second most common method seen in deaths by suicide in both Rhode Islanders overall and Rhode Island males age 25-64.

H 7636 simply creates a process and opportunity for an individual to voluntarily be either temporarily or indefinitely added to a list restricting their rights to purchase or possess firearms. Providing such a pathway allows individuals who may be struggling with suicide ideation to take a more active role in their own safety planning and suicide prevention. Ensuring that an individual also has the ability to request removal from the restricted list and all individual records destroyed and not subject to the State's *Access to Public Records Act* represents a respectful, person-centered approach focused on prevention (as opposed to being punitive). The bill aligns with the State's suicide prevention efforts around the secure offsite storage of firearms. Other states have introduced and/or passed similar laws, including Virginia, Colorado, Washington, and Utah. ***RIDOH's suggested amendment would be to add language laying out whose responsibility it would be to check this list during the firearms purchasing process. An example can be found in the [Virginia legislation](#).*** However, if RIDOH were made responsible for checking the list, RIDOH would require adequate funding to do so. In the absence of such funding, RIDOH would not have the capacity to check the list.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) notes that "most individuals who are prevented from making a suicide attempt via one method typically do not go on to attempt with another method; if they do substitute another method, it will likely be less lethal." According to AFSP, "Firearms are involved in over 50% of all suicides in the U.S. Suicide also accounts for most firearm deaths in the U.S." (See: [AFSP Brief](#)).

A New England Journal of Medicine article notes that “delaying firearm purchases has been found to reduce gun suicides without increasing the number of suicides carried out by other means.” (See: [New England Journal of Medicine, 2020.](#)) A 2016 study published in the Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior Journal found that 46% of individuals who were at high risk for suicide stated that they would put their own name on a Do-Not-Sell list. (See: [Life-Threatening Behavior Journal, 2016](#))

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposed legislation that will save lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jerome M. Larkin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jerome M. Larkin, MD
Director

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Judiciary
The Honorable Jennifer Boylan
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy