

April 14, 2026

Lauren Weinstock, PhD
40 Carriage Lane
Kingston, RI 02881

RE: Bill H7755 and Bill H8069, IN FAVOR OF

Dear Chair McEntee and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to you to request that you **please support H7755**, “The Responsible Firearm Purchasing Act,” which establishes a 7-day waiting period for all firearm purchases and requires a safety training certificate, and to **please support H8069**, “Suicide Awareness at Shooting Ranges,” which requires suicide prevention signage and training for employees at shooting ranges within Rhode Island.

I write in support of these bills as a clinical psychologist, Professor of Psychiatry and Human Behavior at Brown University, suicide prevention researcher and advocate, and RI resident. As you may be aware, our national rate of suicide has increased roughly 30% over the past 20 years, despite enormous efforts to develop, evaluate, and disseminate evidence-based interventions for suicide prevention. Although over 49,000 people die by suicide in the US annually, the rate of suicide attempt is over 30x this number, with approximately 1.5 million suicide attempts reported per year. The most updated statistics reveal that, in Rhode Island, we experience 1 suicide death every 3 days. This number translates to the 15th leading cause of death overall in our state, and for certain subgroups – particularly youth and young adults – suicide is currently the 2nd leading cause of death.

This pattern speaks to the need for not only individual-level, targeted preventive interventions but also **public health, population-level interventions** to support suicide prevention within our communities. Put simply, we cannot do it all with treatment alone; we need systems and programs in place to reduce risk for suicide on a wider scale.

As you may know, firearms represent the most fatal method used in a suicide attempt. Together, these two bills introduce important safeguards that are firmly grounded in evidence-based, lethal means safety approaches for suicide prevention. Specifically, **Bill H7755** would buy critical time for an individual at risk for suicide and introduce a “cooling off period” in a moment of crisis; when they may not be thinking clearly and would not be able to reverse course, once attempted. **Bill H8069**, which introduces safety measures in shooting ranges – environments where people at-risk for suicide otherwise have direct access to lethal means – would provide reminders to people that free and effective help is available. Importantly, this legislation would further arm employees with the language and tools needed to recognize and refer those at-risk to care. There already exist a number of evidence-based “gatekeeper trainings” that would be appropriate to achieve this aim, and RI is fortunate to have a wealth of resources – through AFSP and also through the Brown Consortium for Research Innovation in Suicide Prevention – available to support implementation of such.

As noted in the statistics above, we experience 30x more suicide attempts than suicide deaths annually; if we can reduce access to methods of suicide attempt that are especially lethal, even if we cannot reduce the total number of suicide attempts, this is still one way that we can effectively reduce the overall rate of suicide death and provide opportunities for people to seek treatment and support, so that they can live meaningful lives beyond a moment of crisis.

Thank you very much for your time and attention,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lauren Weinstock".

Lauren Weinstock, PhD