

Representative Carol Hagan McEntee

House Judiciary Committee Chair

Rhode Island State House 82 Smith Street

Providence, RI 02903

April 15, 2026

Dear Representative Hagan McEntee and fellow House Judiciary Committee members:

Thank you for taking the time to consider my written personal and professional testimony today, in support of **H 7755 – The Responsible Firearm Purchasing Act** and **H 8069 – Suicide Awareness at Shooting Ranges**.

My name is Michaela Cook, I currently reside in Cranston, RI. I am a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker for individuals and families from across the state (since MSW in 2013). I am also a volunteer field advocate and Advocacy Committee member for the RI Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (since 2016) and a long-term survivor of suicide loss who has utilized the services available within the department of behavioral healthcare, developmental disabilities, and hospitals as a consumer (since 2003). I am writing today as I am unable to attend in person, due to my fully booked schedule and professional obligations as a clinical supervisor and outpatient therapist with an active caseload of 106 clients; including children (as young as 6) through adults attending in-person sessions, in need of support for their mental health and wellness. My professional obligations to others often extend beyond the hours of 08:00AM and 7:00PM during the Monday-Friday workweek.

My own story of loss and healing began on October 31, 2003, when I lost my best friend and college sweetheart, Jonathan Bagley to a death by suicide (Essex Junction, Vermont). Since that day, my life's work has been invested in my own recovery from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, prolonged grief and advocacy efforts in my personal time, while also helping others heal through their own symptoms and loss of loved ones to suicide. I am thankful for the support I have received along the way as without it I would not be where I am or able to help others heal.

Support of the above-mentioned bills (H 7755 & H 8069) are imperative steps to decreasing access to lethal means when impulse supersedes management of emotions; it provides an added layer of support to prevent others from death by suicide and by homicide. The firearm 'hold' would create a much needed "cooling-off" period that can save lives during an impulsive crisis.

The 988 Crisis Line information and training for those in charge of the shooting ranges offers a crucial step in this prevention effort. This puts life-saving resources and trained eyes exactly where they are needed most. When we are able to talk openly and honestly about our feelings, we remove the stigma and cultivate action that creates healing when the world around us seems so hard to deal with.

Rhode Islanders, across the lifespan, have all been processing the impacts our small state has recently endured at Brown University in December and the Lynch Arena in Pawtucket. The mental health crisis in our state has only grown more urgently and will continue to do so as we begin to restore hope to friends, family members and community in our small state every day. There is help available, and access to these resources is crucial in the prevention of loss of life.

Thank you again for also prioritizing funding in support of mental health, wellness and recovery for all of Rhode Island. You are helping save lives, prevent loss and restore hope when there is no one else to turn to during a time of need. Our community needs this now more than ever.

Best Regards,

Michaela Cook, LICSW

Advocacy Committee Member

AFSP RI Chapter



Jonathan Eric Bagley 11/21/1978-10/31/2003