

Chairperson McEntee, Representative Messier, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to respectfully oppose House Bill 8069.

At the outset, I want to be clear that suicide prevention and mental health awareness are critically important issues. Efforts to support individuals in crisis should be taken seriously and addressed thoughtfully. However, H 8069 places undue and misplaced burdens on shooting ranges and their employees, without clear evidence that it will meaningfully improve public safety or mental health outcomes.

This bill requires shooting ranges to post highly specific signage, restrict access for non-members, and mandate state-approved suicide awareness training for all employees. While these measures may appear well-intentioned, they shift responsibility for complex mental health issues onto private businesses that are neither equipped nor trained to serve in that role.

Shooting ranges are not mental health providers. Requiring their employees to undergo training to identify signs of suicide places them in a position they are not qualified to fulfill and creates potential liability and confusion about their role. Recognizing and responding to mental health crises is a responsibility that should remain with trained professionals, not retail or recreational staff.

Additionally, the bill imposes operational burdens that could negatively impact small businesses. Mandatory training requirements, regulatory compliance, and supervision rules for non-members all add cost, complexity, and administrative strain. For smaller ranges in particular, these requirements may be difficult to implement and sustain, potentially threatening their ability to operate.

The provision requiring non-members to be accompanied at all times is also overly restrictive and may significantly limit access for lawful users, including those seeking to learn firearm safety in a controlled environment. This could have the unintended consequence of reducing opportunities for safe, supervised training, ironically working against the broader goal of safety.

Finally, this bill appears to single out one type of lawful business to address a broader societal issue. If the goal is to reduce suicide and improve mental health outcomes, solutions should be comprehensive, data-driven, and focused on expanding access to mental health care, not placing symbolic or operational mandates on specific industries.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to hold H8069 for further study and not advance it to the House floor.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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