

Testimony in Support of HB 1642 Before the New Hampshire House of Representatives

Hello, my name is **Dr. Christine Arsnow**. I am a practicing pediatrician and the President of the New Hampshire chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. I am here today to **speak in strong support of HB 1642**, which would enact Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs) in New Hampshire.

The New Hampshire American Academy of Pediatrics supports ERPOs because they are a **targeted, evidence-based tool** designed to prevent firearm-related injury and death while respecting due process and lawful gun ownership. ERPOs allow for the temporary removal of firearms from individuals who are at imminent risk of harming themselves or others. I have supported ERPOs for many years on principle, but recent personal experience has strengthened my conviction. A close family member of mine has experienced suicidal thoughts. This individual has many protective factors—a stable job, a loving partner, regular therapy, and appropriate psychiatric care—yet still struggled with thoughts of self-harm. That is the reality of severe mental illness: even strong support systems do not eliminate risk during acute crises.

On multiple occasions, I have been profoundly grateful that this person did **not** have access to a firearm. Suicide attempts involving firearms are far more likely to result in death than other methods. ERPOs create a critical, temporary safeguard during moments of crisis, allowing time for treatment and stabilization.

There must be a lawful mechanism that allows families and law enforcement, with judicial oversight, to intervene when someone poses an imminent risk to themselves or others. **HB 1642 provides that mechanism**. ERPOs are time-limited, include due process protections, and focus on safety—not punishment.

States with similar cultures of firearm ownership have recognized the value of ERPOs. After a devastating mass shooting in Lewiston, Maine enacted its own extreme risk law, acknowledging that prevention is essential. Evidence from other states is clear: after Connecticut increased enforcement of its ERPO law, firearm suicide rates declined by **14%**. In Indiana, firearm suicide rates decreased by **7.5%** in the decade following passage of its ERPO law.

We also know that warning signs frequently precede acts of violence. Nearly **one-third of mass shooters** exhibited warning signs that they posed a risk to themselves or others, and these signs are even more common in cases of school violence. ERPOs allow intervention when those warning signs are recognized—before tragedy occurs.

As a pediatrician, I see the lifelong impact of gun violence on children, families, and communities. As a physician, I am guided by evidence. And as a family member, I have seen how close we can come to irreversible harm. **HB 1642 is a reasonable, lifesaving**

measure that will help prevent suicides and acts of violence while respecting individual rights.

I urge the committee to **recommend HB 1642 as Ought to Pass**. Thank you for your time and your commitment to the safety of New Hampshire's residents.