

Testimony for HB 1642. Robin Skudlarek, Londonderry

In my work on gun violence prevention I have a close view of the lives impacted by the epidemic of gun violence that is unique to our country. My family has been personally affected by this horrendous epidemic. Every day 110 people die from gun violence, 40,000 a year with another 200 plus being shot and wounded. Mass shootings occur almost daily but what doesn't get the attention or make the news is that 2/3rds of those yearly deaths are suicide by firearm. A NH resident dies every three days from suicide by gun. It's tragic, unacceptable and preventable given that we have many ways to reduce this affliction in our society. Our veterans and their families experience suicide by gun at an alarmingly high rate. We owe it to them to do better.

We know that attempted suicide by gun is far more lethal than any other means of ending one's life. One of the main ways we can prevent suicide by gun is by having Red Flag Laws or ERPO. Tragic acts of gun violence, including mass shootings and gun suicides are often preceded by 'red flags', defined as: threats of violence, dangerous behavior, and other indications that a person poses a risk of harming themselves or others. As of February 2025, 21 states, DC and the virgin islands have enacted ERPO laws. Over half of the US population now lives in a jurisdiction with ERPO laws. These laws are saving lives. Red Flag laws empower family members and law enforcement officers, the people most likely to see these warning signs, to intervene by enabling them to seek a court order temporarily restricting a person's access to guns while they are in crisis, to act upon the warning signs and prevent another tragedy from occurring.

A tragedy like the one that happened to my family. 20 years ago my sibling attempted suicide by a gunshot to the head. Statistics will tell you that suicide by gun results in death

more than 85% of the time. Compare that rate to a suicide attempt not involving a gun, less than 5% will result in death. My sibling somehow survived his gunshot to the head, miraculous would be a more appropriate word. He survived, but not without deficits. Part of the bullet was unable to be removed and is still there to this day. Before shooting himself he was in crisis. He was on the verge of eviction, He was depressed, and he had a gun, a most dangerous combination. We knew he was suicidal, he had exhibited signs and he had a gun. He wasn't my child, he was an adult, where was I or my family to go to stop what I feared in my heart might occur? A visit to the police, a lawyer and his psychologist said there was nothing they could do. What I wouldn't give to be able to go back in time and petition the court for an Extreme Risk Protective order and have his gun taken away until the crisis passed. We know that the vast majority of those who survive a suicide attempt do not go on to die by suicide. My sibling is one of those people. I'm grateful he survived. We need tools like ERPO to allow for intervention and hopefully prevent another tragedy to a loved one.

Our neighbor to the north Maine just signed into law a Red Flag Law through a citizens petition with 63% voting yes. A 2023 John's Hopkins poll found that 76% of Americans are supportive of Red Flag Laws, including 72% of gun owners and 75% of Granite Staters.

We have the tools that we know saves lives, we have the support of the community, we just need our legislators to do the right thing.