

**Sarah Gentile**

**Rochester, NH**

**Support of HR 46**

Good afternoon,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HR 46. My name is Sarah Gentile, I am a resident of Rochester, NH and I am representing myself. I am also a survivor of gun violence and a mom of two small children.

Being a survivor of gun violence and the trauma that comes with it stays with you for a lifetime. It reshapes how you move through the world and deepens your understanding of the lasting impact gun violence has on families and communities. For survivors and for those who have lost children, remembrance is both symbolic and deeply personal.

Gun violence is the leading cause of death for children in the United States. More than 4,400 children die from firearms every year<sup>1</sup>. Over the past 25 years, New Hampshire's five-year average rate of gun deaths has increased by nearly 50 percent. Behind every gun violence statistic there are children whose lives have been cut short and families that are forever changed.

Recognizing children lost to gun violence gives families and survivors space to grieve, feel seen, and to know their loved ones are not forgotten in a country constantly rattled by gun violence. A day of remembrance does not take sides in policy debates but instead acknowledges these losses and affirms that these lives mattered.

The timing of this remembrance is also meaningful. Since 2015, communities across the country have gathered in early June as part of Wear Orange, a movement that began after the tragic shooting and death of Hadiya Pendleton in 2013<sup>2</sup>. Orange was chosen because it is the color hunters wear to stay safe, a symbol of a goal I think we all share: keeping people, especially children, safe. Here in New Hampshire, survivors, community partners, and gun safety advocates gather in Portsmouth for Wear Orange and walk together across the Memorial bridge to Kittery, Maine. When we arrive, we share stories of loss and survivorship and speak openly about how gun violence has affected our communities. After sunset, the City of Portsmouth lights Memorial Bridge in orange, a visible act of remembrance and solidarity.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://everystat.org/#NewHampshire>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/chicago/news/hadiya-pendleton-murder-13-years/>

I do have one concern. I did not see language in the bill about the families being made aware of or giving permission for their children to be memorialized. Families experience grief differently and some may not want public recognition of their loss. Including clear language requiring family permission would help make sure this remembrance is rooted in compassion, dignity and respect.

I ask the committee to support HR 46 with consideration for clarifying the language around family consent.

Thank you for your time.

Sarah Gentile