

Roberta DiMezza

From: Siegel, Deborah H. <dsiegel@ric.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, March 5, 2024 1:29 PM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: In Support of H 7373: Safe Storage Act

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Dear Chairperson Craven and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

As a mom and as a clinical social worker who works with people facing suicide; domestic violence; and gun violence at home, school and on the streets, I support the Safe Storage of Firearms Act, H7373.

One day, my ten-year-old daughter came home from playing at a friend's house and said, "Hey Mom, I held a real gun today at Samantha's house. She showed me where her dad keeps the gun in a bedside table. It was loaded. Cool!" I immediately called Samantha's dad to check out the story and the dad said, "Oh, don't worry about it. The kids know not to touch it." When I told him what my daughter reported, he denied it was possible. (As the saying goes, "denial is not just a river in Egypt.) I never again sent my child there to play.

I support the Safe Storage Act, which *"would make it a felony for the owner of any firearm to store the firearm unlocked. Failure to store the firearm locked would subject the owner to a fine of not more than \$3,000. If the owner of a firearm leaves it loaded and a child gains access and causes injury then the owner can be subject to a penalty of up to 5 years imprisonment and/or a fine of not more than \$5,000."*

This is sane gun safety legislation, not a threat to the Second Amendment or to gun owners; rights. It is a badly needed public health measure.

74.8% of Rhode Islanders want gun owners held accountable when the owner's gun is used in a crime. An unlocked loaded gun can be stolen to be used in a crime. It can become a readily available murder weapon in domestic violence, a means of suicide by a troubled 17 year old.

The RI public policy think tank, Kids Count, reports in its 2021 *Fact Book* that from 2016 to 2019 "gun related incidents in RI among children and youth ages 1 to 19" included:

- 145 Emergency room visits
- 31 Hospitalizations for injuries
- 7 Deaths
- 2 Youth suicides

Clearly, access to inadequately stored guns is harming RI's children and youths.

Dr. Nicole Alexander Scott, former Director of RI's Department of Health noted that, ""From 2014 to 2018, 208 Rhode Islanders died as a result of firearms. Of these tragic deaths, 70% were due to suicide or intentional self-harm. Each of these deaths was preventable and all were tragic. The one common denominator was access to a firearm."

The Annals of Internal Medicine reported in 2014 that “Firearms that are stored loaded or unlocked are more likely to be used” in suicide “than those that are unloaded or locked, and adolescent suicide victims often use an unlocked firearm in the home.”

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends keeping guns away from children. It’s a matter of life and death.

The American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine *reported in 2011 that* “there is **no good evidence of a deterrent effect of firearms** or that a gun in the home reduces the likelihood or severity of injury during an altercation or break-in.” Hence, when a gun owner declares that locking their gun would get in the way of protecting themselves in a home invasion, there is little data backing up that claim.

I am not arguing against someone owning a gun. I am arguing that loaded firearms must be kept safely locked. Safely storing and locking a firearm in no way infringes upon gun owners’ rights under the Second Amendment. Allowing gun owners to store loaded weapons unlocked, however, infringes on others’ rights to life and safety.

Please do the right thing. Pass this sane, common sense gun safety measure.

Regards,

Deborah H. Siegel, Ph.D, LICSW, DCSW, ACSW
Professor Emerita, School of Social Work, Rhode Island College
dsiegel@ric.edu
cell: 401-474-4294

Please note: E-mail communications cannot be assumed to be confidential.

Deborah H. Siegel, Ph.D., LICSW, DCSW, ACSW
Professor Emerita of Social Work
School of Social Work
Guardo Hall
Rhode Island College
600 Mount Pleasant Avenue
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

Please note: E-mail communications cannot be assumed to be confidential.