

RE: H7373 section 11-47-60.4. Secure storage information and awareness

March 12, 2024

Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Rhode Island Chapter, strongly **supports H7373 11-47-60.4, Secure storage information and awareness**, which would require firearm dealers to post informational signs regarding firearm safe storage, suicide risks, how to access help (988), and school districts to make this information available to all students, parents, or guardians each year.

In Rhode Island in 2021, suicide was the 2nd leading cause of death for youth, teens, and young adults ages 10-24, the 2nd leading cause for adults ages 25-44, and the 12th leading cause of death overall. That same year, 56% of firearm deaths were suicides, and 31% of suicides were by firearms.

Firearms are the most commonly used and most lethal method (“means”) of suicide. For this reason, effective suicide prevention efforts must address firearm safety and suicide prevention to firearm owners, students, parents, and guardians. We know from research that access to a firearm in the home increases the risk of suicide and that separating suicidal individuals from a variety of lethal means, including firearms, helps prevent suicide.

Most individuals who are prevented from making a suicide attempt via one method typically do not go on to attempt with another method. If we can prevent a person who intends to die by firearm suicide from attempting with that firearm, they will likely not go on to attempt with another method. If they do substitute another method, it will likely be less lethal.

H7373 11-47-60.4 would simply ensure that individuals purchasing a firearm, as well as students and their parents, are made aware of the risks associated with firearms, suicide prevention resources, state laws requiring secure firearms storage, and the importance of secure storage requiring firearm dealers and schools to distribute and post such information. These resources can enable firearm owners to regularly assess whether their firearm storage is safe from access from household members who may be at risk of suicide, including themselves.

Putting time and distance between a person at risk and lethal means can save lives: this allows time for the suicidal risk to diminish, for the intense suicidal impulse to pass, or for someone to intervene with mental health support and resources. Whenever possible, AFSP recommends that firearms be stored safely or removed from the home voluntarily and temporarily during a time of increased risk.

AFSP is the leading national not-for-profit organization exclusively dedicated to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide; the Rhode Island chapter carries out this mission across the state. We appreciate your consideration of **H7373 11-47-60.4**. We firmly believe that attention and commitment to suicide prevention and firearms safety have important implications for the current and future health and well-being of all Rhode Island residents.

Sincerely,

Kerrie Constant

Kerrie Constant, Area Director

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Rhode Island Chapter