

Dear Members of the Rhode Island Legislature,

I am writing to express my strong support for the Voluntary Do Not Sell Firearms List, a critical tool in preventing impulsive suicides while respecting personal autonomy. As a clinical social worker with over 20 years of experience in emergency and crisis behavioral health here in Rhode Island, I have seen firsthand the devastating consequences of easy firearm access for those in crisis.

My friend's mother, Donna, was able to impulsively search online for where to buy a gun, make a purchase shortly after, and then end her life. If she had had the option to voluntarily place herself on a Do Not Sell list when she was feeling well, she would very likely still be alive today. We already allow individuals to self-exclude from casinos to prevent financial harm—surely, we should offer the same proactive choice for those who recognize they may be at risk of suicide. The lethality of firearms is far greater than that of gambling, making this measure even more urgent.

Throughout my career, I have worked with many individuals who were at risk of suicide, including those who survived firearm attempts under unimaginable circumstances. I have evaluated patients who attempted “suicide by cop” by aiming a gun at an officer, and I have met people who survived self-inflicted gunshot wounds by sheer luck—like the man who fired under his chin but only sustained severe burns. I have also worked with families who were able to intervene in time, such as the spouse who found a suicide note after a loved one's car broke down on their way to carry out their plan. But for every person I have seen and helped, there are countless others who did not get that chance—because access to a gun too often means there is no opportunity for a second chance.

This legislation is not about restricting rights; it is about offering individuals the power to protect themselves when they are in a stable state of mind. A Voluntary Do Not Sell list gives people a critical tool to prevent impulsive acts of self-harm that too often end in tragedy.

I urge you to support this life-saving legislation. It is a simple, voluntary, and effective measure that can prevent unnecessary loss and heartbreak.

Sincerely,
Kate Noveau, LICSW
Clinical Social Worker, Rhode Island