



Testimony to the Judiciary Committee in support of Proposed Senate Bill No. 650, House Bill No. 6848, and House Bill No. 6962

On Behalf of the National Physicians Alliance and
The American College of Physicians
March 11, 2015

We would like to thank the Chairs and Members of the Judiciary Committee for their careful consideration of important legislation which we hope will help to reduce gun violence in the state of Connecticut. We write to you today as members of the Steering Committee of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Physicians Alliance, a national organization with a strong Connecticut presence representing physicians across multiple specialties committed to improving the health of our patients, and the Connecticut Chapter of the American College of Physicians, the largest specialty organization in the country.

As noted recently in a report by American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Emergency Physicians, American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American College of Physicians, American College of Surgeons, American Psychiatric Association, the American Public Health Association, and the American Bar Association, firearm-related injuries and death are a major public health issue. Reducing this burden will involve broad and comprehensive approaches. One key feature of this effort should focus on reducing availability of firearms to persons who are reasonably thought to pose a threat to themselves or others.

Regarding SB 650 and HB 6848, these proposals reflect the recommendations of the Connecticut Legislative Task Force to Study Service of Restraining Orders. As physicians, we see the devastating impact of domestic violence on the physical and mental health of our patients every day. We encourage our patients to find ways to change their situation and protect themselves from harm. At the time of application for a restraining order, applicants are particularly vulnerable to retribution from those who they most fear. Currently under CT law, there is a two week period between an application for a restraining order and the 14 day hearing during which the accused may seek to harm the applicant. An ex parte restraining order with removal of firearms and ammunition from the respondents during this time period should serve as extra protection for the applicant from those who are reasonably thought to pose risk.

Regarding HB 6962, a key aspect of firearm ownership is safe storage and preventing those who should not be able to access guns from being able to do so. The current legislation extends these responsibilities for the owner so that he or she would be guilty of criminally negligent storage of a firearm (whether stored loaded or not) if any person obtains the firearm and causes the injury or death of himself or any other person. When a child takes a gun from his parents and injures himself or another child, this is not an accident. This is a preventable injury where the parents were negligent in protecting the injured from harm. Unintentional injuries from firearms represent less than two percent of all firearm deaths in the U.S. But of this two percent, children and adolescents are involved in 55% of these deaths. The majority of the injuries occur to children playing with or showing the weapons to friends. The easy availability of firearms is believed to be the number one risk factor for unintentional firearm deaths.

(http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/Youth_Gun_Violence_Fact_Sheet.pdf) In addition, the preponderance of current evidence indicates that gun availability is a risk factor for

youth suicide in the United States according to a review from 1999. Placing more responsibility on the owner of the firearm to ensure that only those who are able to use the weapon safely will save lives, particular those of our children.

We greatly appreciate your support of this important legislation which can reduce firearm-related injuries and death among our patients in Connecticut. Our citizens deserve nothing less.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie R. Rosenbaum". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Julie R. Rosenbaum MD, FACP

On behalf of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Physicians Alliance

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Nardino MD". The signature is cursive and includes a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert J. Nardino, MD, FACP

Governor, American College of Physicians CT Chapter