

Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence  
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Testimony of Ari Davis, Public Health Fellow, Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence.

**SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 19-1177: AN ACT CONCERNING CREATION OF AN EXTREME RISK PROTECTIVE ORDER.**

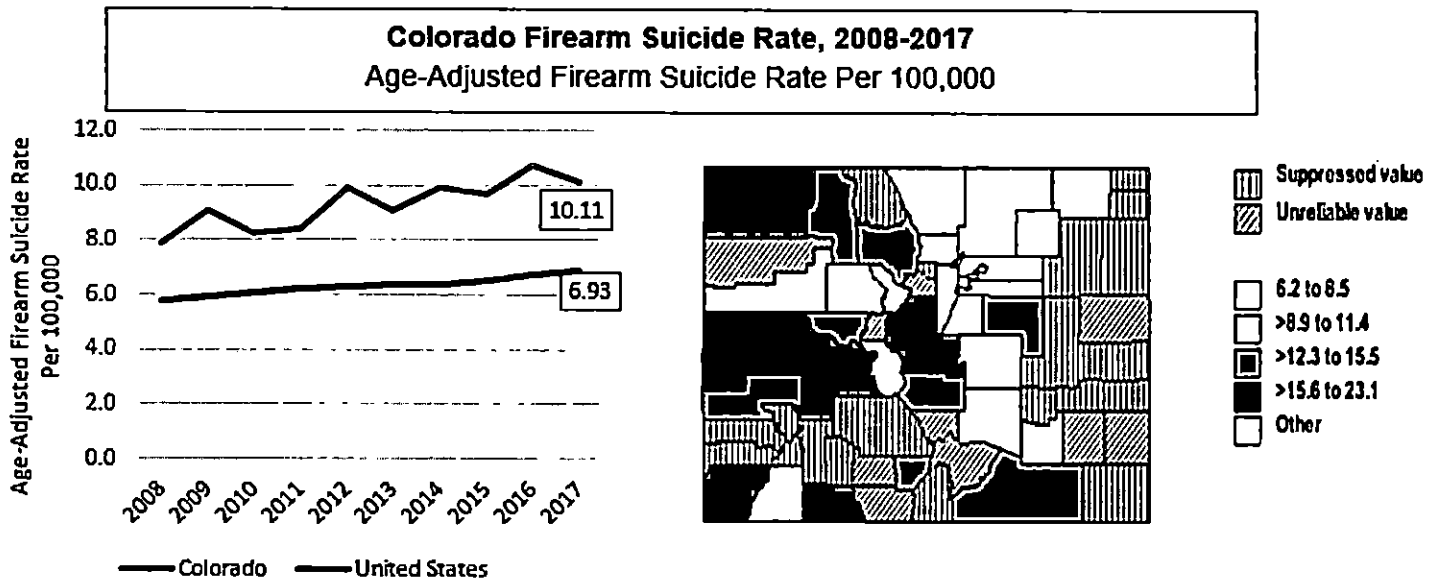
Before the Colorado House Judiciary Committee.  
 February 21, 2019.

As a Public Health Fellow at the Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence and native of Boulder, Colorado I am writing today in support of House Bill 19-1177: An act concerning the creation of an Extreme Risk Protective Order (ERPO).

I ask the House Judiciary Committee to consider the following points in their decision whether to support HB19-1177: (1) suicides are increasing in Colorado, and firearms are a key contributing factor; (2) rigorous research suggests that Extreme Risk laws reduce suicides; and (3) similar legislation was passed with bipartisan support in a wide range of states.

***Suicides Are Increasing in Colorado, And Firearms Are A Key Contributing Factor***

Over the last decade (2008-2017) Colorado’s suicide rate increased by 28%, and suicides accounted for 1,181 deaths in 2017. Half of these individuals used a firearm.<sup>1</sup> A Coloradan is nearly 1.5 times more likely to die by firearm suicide than the average American. Within 15 counties - most of which are rural- the firearm suicide death rate is more than twice as high as the national average, and in Moffat, Teller, and Gunnison counties, individuals are over three times more likely to die by firearm suicide than the average American.



Note: Age-adjusted rates were used to allow for accurate comparisons between populations with differing age distribution

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Available: <http://wonder.cdc.gov/ucd-icd10.html>

### *Backed by Rigorous Data and Research*

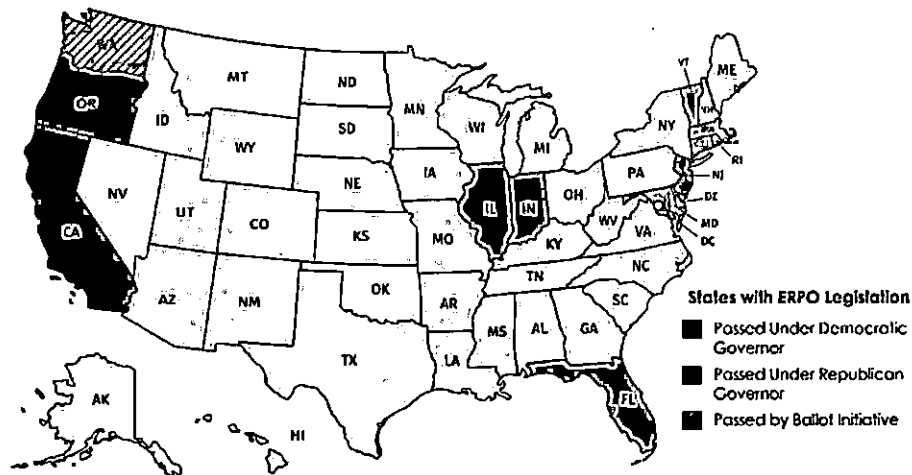
Research suggests that HB19-1177 will help address the crisis of suicide in Colorado. Peer-reviewed studies consistently show that easy access to firearms increases the risk of dying by suicide.<sup>ii</sup> Eighty-five percent of suicide attempts using firearms are lethal, whereas by comparison, suicide attempts by poisoning and overdose are lethal only 2% of the time.<sup>iii</sup> Approximately seventy-percent of individuals who survive suicide will not try again, and will often seek support.<sup>iv</sup> Therefore, temporarily limiting access to firearms is a crucial element of suicide prevention because it increases the probability that an individual will survive a suicide attempt.

Research also shows that Extreme Risk laws which temporarily reduce access to firearms for individuals at a high risk of harm to self or others is effective policy. Notably, an evaluation of Connecticut's risk-warrant law, a law that is similar to HB19-1177, estimated that for every 10 to 20 risk-warrants issued, one life is saved.<sup>v</sup>

**Researchers estimated that a similar Extreme Risk law in Connecticut saved one life for every 10 to 20 risk warrants issued.**

### *Similar ERPO Legislation Passed with Bipartisan Support in A Wide Range of States*

Extreme Risk laws have gained support from prominent Republican and Democratic policymakers alike. Lawmakers in thirteen states have passed Extreme Risk laws. Within these states, over 150 Republican state legislators voted in favor of Extreme Risk laws. Likewise, in 2018 alone, five Republican Governors signed Extreme Risk legislation into law.<sup>vi</sup>



Source: data attained from state legislative databases; data is also available [here](#).<sup>vii</sup>

Extreme Risk laws have also gained bipartisan support at the federal level. The 2018 Federal Commission on School Safety, commissioned by the Trump Administration, dedicated an entire chapter towards Extreme Risk Laws, with recommendations “encouraging states to adopt laws permitting extreme risk protection orders (ERPO’s)”<sup>viii</sup> Prominent Republican Senators, such as Marco Rubio,<sup>ix</sup> and Lindsey Graham,<sup>x</sup> have introduced bills promoting Extreme Risk laws; and legislators from both sides of the aisle support such bills.<sup>xi</sup>

### **Conclusion**

With the passage of HB19-1177 Colorado lawmakers would provide law enforcement and those closest to individuals at risk of harming themselves or others the tools they need to save lives. The evidence is clear: temporarily removing firearms from those at a high risk of committing violence will prevent suicides and make communities safer.

As a public health fellow at the Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence and as a native Coloradan who cares deeply about my state, I urge you to support this evidence-backed, bipartisan policy which saves lives.

Sincerely,  
Ari Adam Davis, MPP  
Public Health Fellow  
Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence

### **References**

<sup>i</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Suicide Deaths and Rates per 100,000. WONDER Online Database, 1999-2017. Available: <http://wonder.cdc.gov/ucd-icd10.html>

<sup>ii</sup> Miller, M., Barber, C., White, R. A., & Azrael, D. (2013). Firearms and suicide in the United States: Is risk independent of underlying suicidal behavior?. *American journal of epidemiology*, 178(6), 946-955.

<sup>iii</sup> Miller, M., Azrael, D., & Barber, C. (2012). Suicide mortality in the United States: the importance of attending to method in understanding population-level disparities in the burden of suicide. *Annual review of public health*, 33, 393-408.

<sup>iv</sup> Owens D, Horrocks J, and House A. Fatal and non-fatal repetition of self-harm: systematic review. *British Journal of Psychiatry*. 2002;181:193-199.

<sup>v</sup> Swanson, JW, Norko, M, Lin, HJ, Alanis-Hirsch, K, Frisman, L, Baranoski, M, Easter, M, Gilbert, A, Swartz, M, & Bonnie, RJ. Implementation and Effectiveness of Connecticut's Risk-Based Gun Removal Law: Does it Prevent Suicides? (August 24, 2016). *Law and Contemporary Problems*. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2828847>

<sup>vi</sup> Campbell S., Yablon A. Red flag laws: where the bills stand in each state. The Trace. Last updated January 10, 2019. Available: <https://www.thetrace.org/2018/03/red-flag-laws-pending-bills-tracker-nra/>

<sup>vii</sup> Campbell S., Yablon A. Red flag laws: where the bills stand in each state. The Trace. Last updated January 10, 2019. Available: <https://www.thetrace.org/2018/03/red-flag-laws-pending-bills-tracker-nra/>

<sup>viii</sup> Final Report of the Federal Commission on School Safety. Presented to the President of the United States. December 18, 2018. Available: <https://www2.ed.gov/documents/school-safety/school-safety-report.pdf>

<sup>ix</sup> S.2607 Extreme Risk Protection Order and Violence Prevention Act of 2018. Available: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/2607/cosponsors>

<sup>x</sup> S.2521 Federal Extreme Risk Protection Order Act of 2018. Available: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/2521/cosponsors>

<sup>xi</sup> H.R.6747 Protecting Our Communities and Rights Act 2018. Available: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/6747/cosponsors>