

Testimony In support of HB21-1299: Office of Gun Violence Prevention  
Before the Senate State, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee  
May 25, 2021

My name is Bobbie Klein. I am a 30-year resident of Boulder. I am writing to express my strong support for HB21-1299.

When I first moved to Boulder, I lived in the Table Mesa neighborhood near King Soopers and shopped there at least a couple of times a week. Although I was not there on March 22, I could have been if my daily routine happened to be different that day. Even before this mass shooting, I frequently worried that I or a loved one would be directly affected by gun violence. Now grief has been added to my fear as I mourn for the 10 people who lost their lives. To say that this mass shooting has had an absolutely devastating impact on our community is an understatement.

Columbine. The Aurora Theater. Planned Parenthood. STEM School. And now King Soopers. A 2019 Denver Post analysis concluded that Colorado has had more mass shootings per capita than all but 4 other states and the District of Columbia.<sup>1</sup> And mass shootings are just a small percentage of overall gun deaths. Whenever these horrific incidents occur we ask ourselves, why does this continue to happen in our beautiful state? And more importantly, what can we do to prevent it from happening again?

I agree with those who argue that we should treat gun violence as a public health issue and research its causes as well as effective responses. These responses could be as varied as common-sense restrictions on gun purchases to greening vacant spaces.<sup>2</sup> Research into gun violence prevention at the federal level was stymied for years due to the 1996 “Dickey Amendment” which barred the CDC from spending money to advocate or promote gun control. Now we must act quickly to catch up. While \$25 million was recently allocated to federal agencies to study gun violence, this is a pittance compared to the magnitude of the problem: approximately 800 gun deaths per year in Colorado (close to 40,000 nationwide) with an estimated annual cost of \$5.6 billion in Colorado (\$280 billion nationwide).<sup>3</sup>

HB21-1299, which would create an Office of Gun Violence Prevention (OGVP) within the Department of Public Health and Environment, will ensure that Colorado-specific research is targeted and shared. One of the OGVP’s stated purposes is to “Promote research regarding causes of, and evidence-based responses to, gun violence.” Among its specific duties are assisting researchers seeking information about gun violence in Colorado, collaborating with gun violence prevention researchers on certain topics, and promoting new and relevant gun violence prevention research and making it accessible to researchers and the public.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.denverpost.com/2019/05/12/denver-colorado-school-shootings/>

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/27/us/politics/gun-violence-research-cdc.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://everystat.org/#cost>; <https://everystat.org/#Colorado>

Let's make sure we are relying on the best available research and data to address gun violence in Colorado. I urge you to vote "yes" on HB21-1299 and to fully fund the OGVP so it can carry out its duties effectively. Thank you.

Chairperson, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide my written testimony.

My name is Maya Haasz, and I am representing the American Academy of Pediatrics and Children's Hospital Colorado. I am here to speak in favor of bill 1299.

I am submitting my testimony as a Pediatric Emergency Physician, now in practice for 10 years. For the playful 5-year-old boy who came in with a fever, a pretty common concern in a child. Only this child, paralyzed from the waist down by a stray bullet that struck him when he was playing outside a year prior, had to come to the Emergency room whenever he had fever.

For the toddler who came to our hospital, shot by while playing with her sibling. For her family who will agonize over her loss and whether they could have prevented it.

For the many other youth who, in their moment of crisis, found a gun to use in their suicide attempt instead of a bottle of pills. Firearms have a fatality rate of over 90% - those kids don't make it to my hospital.

For all the children I have seen in the ER with firearm injuries, injuries that are entirely avoidable. Children who do not survive their injuries. Children who do survive, only to suffer the emotional and psychological consequences. For parents with grief so vast, so all-consuming, that it is almost tangible. I wish I could share their names, their faces, more of their stories so you can understand that these could be your neighbors, your grandchildren, your children.

Colorado is facing a crisis. A child in Colorado is injured by a firearm every day and one child dies every week, on average<sup>1</sup>. Nationwide, firearms are the second leading cause of death in children<sup>2</sup>. In Colorado, as of 2019, firearm deaths surpassed motor vehicle deaths as the number one cause of death in children for the first time. The number one cause. If I said cancer was the number one cause of death in children, or heart disease, wouldn't you choose to act?

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<sup>1</sup> **Fatal and Nonfatal Firearm Injuries Compared to Automobile Injuries in Colorado Children**  
**Carl Armon, PhD; Jessica Cataldi, MD; Edwin Asturias, MD; Cameron Todd;**  
James Todd, MD

<sup>2</sup> Cunningham RM, Walton MA, Carter PM. The Major Causes of Death in Children and Adolescents in the United States. N Engl J Med. 2018 Dec 20;379(25):2468-2475.

Something must be done to protect our children. This is not just a public health issue, this is a public health emergency and it is our duty to act. We have evidence for some strategies that are effective at reducing firearm injuries, but not enough. Why? Because gun violence is the least researched cause of death in relation to mortality rates, largely because the funding has not been there.

But we have a roadmap. The same roadmap that has seen deaths from motor vehicle collisions steadily decline over decades. We didn't take away cars, we researched ways to make cars and roads safer. We tried seatbelts and speed limits, car seats and traffic lights. And then we looked at the data, and made evidence-based decisions that would improve the health of our population.

The Office of Gun Violence Prevention would do just that – gather data so we can identify and help at risk populations, support gun violence prevention programs, and provide education to the community that is so sorely needed. It is the way to create real change and decrease the burden of firearm injury, in all its forms, in our state.

Chairperson, members of the committee, there is a significant parallel in the work we do. As a physician, I took an oath to care for and protect my patients and community. You have been elected to do the same. I implore you, care for those people, those communities who are impacted by gun violence and vote yes on 1299.

Thank you.

Haley Brown  
Boulder, CO 80301

May 23, 2021

Testimony For HB21-1299

I am writing to express my support for HB21-1299, and to thank lawmakers who are actively working to introduce common-sense gun laws in Colorado. I live in Boulder with my husband, and we are expecting our first child in October. Amid the excitement of her arrival, I find myself experiencing a lot of fear about this world I am bringing her into. On March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 10 people were killed while grocery shopping at the King Sooper's in Boulder; on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 6 members of a family were killed at a birthday party in Colorado Springs; each day, we all live in fear of the next mass shooting that feels like it could occur anywhere, at any time. Gun violence is tragic, it is painful, and it is also **preventable**.

Daily gun violence and mass shootings are **preventable** with strong gun laws and better public education. HB21-1299 will create a state Office of Gun Violence Prevention, which would act to publicize Colorado's extreme risk law and provide support for violence intervention programming. This office will educate the public, law enforcement and other important stakeholders about gun violence prevention laws, as well as other critical public safety measure, like secure firearm storage practices. A recent study in the Journal of the American Medical Association found households that locked both firearms and ammunition were associated with a 78% lower risk of self-inflicted firearm injuries, and an 85% lower risk among children, compared to households that lock neither.<sup>1</sup> Educating our public *will* prevent gun violence.

The Office of Gun Violence Prevention will also establish grant programs to fund violence intervention programs, which provide evidence-based and community-informed, comprehensive support to those most at risk of experiencing gun violence. Programs like these have been demonstrated to reduce overall crime, gun violence and deaths in neighborhoods most impacted by gun violence.<sup>2,3</sup> I am asking you today, as a current Colorado resident and future Colorado mother, to support HB21-1299 to establish the Office of Gun Violence Prevention and begin creating the future we all want for our state and our children— a world that has common-sense, **life-saving** gun laws that keep us all safe. Thank you for your time and your work.

1. Grossman DC, Mueller BA, Riedy C, et al. Gun storage practices and risk of youth suicide and unintentional firearm injuries. *Journal of the American Medical Association*. 2005;293(6):707-714.
2. Sheyla A. Delgado et al., "The Effects of Cure Violence in the South Bronx and East New York, Brooklyn," in *Denormalizing Violence* (New York: John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Research and Evaluation Center, 2017), <https://johnjayrec.nyc/2017/10/02/cvinsobronxeastny/>.
3. Viviane Sanfelice, "Are Safe Routes Effective? Assessing the Effects of Chicago's Safe Passage Program on Local Crimes," *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 164 (August 2019): 357–73, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2019.06.013>.

Good afternoon Committee Members. My name is Julie Carr. I live in Colorado Springs, CO.

The daily toll of gun violence is mounting in Colorado Springs. For the past 5 years as a volunteer with Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense, I have been learning to understand the many facets of gun violence in my community. I am convinced that it is vital for Colorado to approach gun violence as a multifaceted public health crisis and I applaud this proposed bill HB1299 to establish a Colorado Office of Gun Violence Prevention.

El Paso County and Colorado Springs is a growing community and in tandem with our population growth we have seen a rise in gun violence. We are projected to see a population increase of 250,000 people thru 2050. In my opinion we are wholly unprepared for the gun violence that will continue and likely grow and the resulting trauma and cost to our community.

Between 2015 and 2019, El Paso county has the highest number of suicides and highest number of firearm related suicides of all counties in Colorado. During that time, 484 people died by firearm suicide. In 2019 there were 206 suicides, 113 of those were by firearm; up from 181 total suicides in 2018, 91 of those by firearm.

In Colorado Springs homicides reached a record high in 2020 According to the Colorado Springs Police Department, there were 42 more shootings reported in 2020 than 2019, and nearly 1,000 more calls for service for "shots fired" were received.

Colorado Springs has community and faith based organizations that are deeply invested in preventing violence especially in pockets of our community where those who are most at risk of gun violence victimization live. These organizations struggle to piece together grant funding, volunteers, and the data that is needed to sustain their prevention and intervention efforts. Overall, public and private efforts to curb all these aspects of deadly gun violence are fragmented and under resourced. The grant program that will be housed in this Office will be critically important to supporting these and similar efforts.

Each month I attend the El Paso County Firearm Safety Workgroup. Community members, medical professionals, firearms proponents, representatives of local suicide prevention groups and public health officials are working together to reduce firearm suicides in El Paso County. For close to 2 years the group has worked to create a locally targeted firearm suicide prevention public service announcement video. The video is close to completion but we do not know where funds to distribute this carefully crafted life saving message into the community will come from. I am confident my community and so many others would benefit greatly from the coordination and resources of a statewide Office of Gun Violence Prevention. Let's make this investment in tackling gun violence and strengthening Colorado communities. Please vote yes on HB 1299.

Testimony In support of HB21-1299:  
Office of Gun Violence Prevention  
Senate State Veteran and Military Affairs  
May 24, 2021

Thank you, members of the committee. And thank you, Representatives Tom Sullivan and Jennifer Bacon and Senators Rhonda Fields and Chris Hansen, for introducing this important piece of legislation. My name is Christina Gardner and I live in South Boulder. As a mom, teacher, Moms Demand Action volunteer, and a member of the Everytown Survivor Network, I know the destruction that everyday gun violence inflicts on communities. And as a resident of South Boulder, I now have firsthand knowledge of the neverending heartache that follows a mass shooting in one's own neighborhood. I also know that the gun violence happening across our country is preventable if legislators take action to pass strong common sense gun reform measures such as HB21-1299. I strongly support this bill, which would create an Office of Gun Violence Prevention (OGVP) within the Department of Public Health and Environment.

HB21-1299 would be an integral component in assisting researchers seeking information about gun violence in Colorado, collaborating with gun violence prevention researchers in certain areas, and promoting new and relevant gun violence prevention research and making it accessible to researchers and the public. With this office, Colorado can be at the forefront of gun violence research. We can also work to fund these critically important endeavors after decades of severely underfunded research on gun violence.<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, the economic devastation that gun violence enacts on Colorado and our country as a whole is staggering. Gun violence costs the United States \$280 billion every year, including \$1.7 billion that individuals, families, and employers spend on out-of-pocket medical and mental health care costs.<sup>2</sup> It's long past time to focus concentrated effort on economic spending that is preventative rather than triage.

In the days leading up to the tragic shootings at the Table Mesa King Soopers, my children and I shopped several times alongside our neighbors, and we chatted with Teri Leiker as we frequently did. And in the days since Teri and nine others were murdered at our grocery store, mass shootings and everyday gun violence has continued in staggering numbers. The constant gun violence that has happened already in 2021 is hard to comprehend. However, we must not let this continue to be the status quo in our state and in our country. Please vote "yes" on HB21-1299 and also please adequately fund the OGVP so it can carry out its duties effectively.

Christina Gardner,  
Boulder Moms Demand Action Volunteer  
Everytown Survivor Network

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.everytown.org/issues/gun-violence-prevention-research-funding/>

<sup>2</sup>

<https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-economic-cost-of-gun-violence/>

## **Written Testimony in Support of HB21-1299**

To: Committee Members of Senate, Veterans and Military Affairs Committee

Submitted by: Paige Leonard, Littleton

May 25, 2015

Thank you, members of the committee, for reading my testimony today. My name is Paige Leonard and I live in Littleton, CO; HD 25, SD20, and I am a volunteer with the Colorado chapter of Moms Demand Action. I write in support of HB21-1299.

After years of traumatic mass shootings, school shootings, movie theater shootings, store shootings, and everyday gun violence that has taken so many lives, we owe it to Coloradans to establish an Office for Gun Violence Prevention. Everywhere you look in Colorado, you are constantly reminded of lives tragically lost to gun violence--it's in our face, every day. My husband and I often talk seriously about moving out of state because of the horrific epidemic of gun violence in Colorado. After every tragic shooting that happens in our state, we discuss if this is a safe place to raise our kids. It's too much. It was too much YEARS ago and it is past time to do something about it. I thank the sponsors for introducing this bill and advocating for time, funding, and resources to address this ongoing epidemic. This has been a public health emergency for YEARS. It is past time an Office for Gun Violence Prevention is established.

Educating the public on resources and laws already in place to reduce gun violence will only save lives. Coloradans need to be educated about the Extreme Risk Protection Order details and how they can take simple steps to keep their own family and community safe when they feel a loved one is in crisis, a danger to themselves or others. These laws are proven to work, but are only as effective as their implementation - we must be sure the community is educated on how to access the good laws on the books.

The public will need to be educated about the new lost and stolen and secure storage laws; two laws that are critical to changing the current trend of gun trafficking and gun violence. People need to understand how to do their part, how to be responsible gun owners and this can be achieved through public awareness campaigns. In addition to educating the public, collecting and organizing gun violence data from across the state is critical to observe patterns, gather and share information with experts.

As a mother of a five and nine year old, it is something I think about and worry about every single day when I drop my kids off at school. I get a knot in my stomach as I watch them walk into the building and pray they stay safe. We shouldn't have to live like this. My kindergartner shouldn't have to have nightmares after school shooter drills. I shouldn't have to panic and know where my exits are when I'm grocery shopping. Coloradans have endured enough trauma from these acts of gun violence and it is past time to give ample resources and funding to keep our families and communities safe. Please vote YES on HB21-1299 and establish the Office of Gun Violence Prevention in Colorado. Thank you for your time.

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My name is Emmy Betz, and I express my strong support for HB 21-1299.

I represent myself, not a position of the University of Colorado, the CU School of Medicine, UCHealth, or any other organization I work with.

As a proud **Colorado native**, I support this bill to develop a non-partisan, apolitical hub for firearm injury prevention. I do not own a gun myself, but I have family, friends, and colleagues who are responsible gun owners. They use firearms in their jobs, or for hunting, or for personal protection or recreation at the range. And we share a common goal: none of us wants a loved one to be injured or killed by a firearm. And yet, too many of us – me included - have already lost loved ones. When we talk about “violence”, we need to remember suicide – self-inflicted violence. In our state, 76% of all firearm deaths are by suicide – in 2019 alone, 43 children and teens died by firearm suicide. Those deaths are not more, or less, important than deaths by other causes. But they require different approaches than other types of violence. CDPHE is already doing great work in firearm suicide prevention – in fact, it is recognized nationally for its statewide ‘gun shop project’ engaging retailers and ranges in suicide prevention. This bill would further support efforts like that.

I also write as an **emergency physician**. I am unfortunately too used to caring for patients who have been shot, or who are at risk of being shot, or who are at risk of shooting themselves. In the hospital, we do our best to stop the bleeding and save lives. But we need more. We need programs to refer survivors to – programs like Hospital Based Violence Intervention Programs, which surround individuals with support and connection to services to stop the vicious cycle of daily violence. We need programs in the community that intervene before violence occurs. We need programs to support the families and friends who have witnessed violence or lost loved ones. And we need programs and education to encourage people to voluntarily reduce access to firearms during times of suicide risk – because we know this can save lives. I believe this bill could help fill these needs.

Finally, I express my support for this bill as a **researcher** in firearm injury prevention. Over the past decade, I have led or assisted with numerous studies on the topic, with funding from the National Institutes of Health, the CDC, the Department of Defense, and various foundations. My research is focused on engagement of affected communities in developing and testing solutions. This bill would support a hub that would provide infrastructure, data, grants, and networking that would support researchers and programs in Colorado, so that we can all continue working to keep our residents healthy. Science should not be about politics. Science is about keeping an open mind and using strong methods to test what works, and why. Now is the time for us to take the necessary steps to prevent firearm injuries and deaths.

Thank you.



Testimony of Kelsey Rogers, Senior Manager, State Policy  
Support for HB21-1299  
Before the Colorado Senate State, Veterans & Military Affairs Committee  
May 25, 2021

Dear Chairman Foote, Vice Chair Court, and Other Distinguished Members of the Colorado Senate State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee,

Founded in 1974, Brady works across Congress, courts, and communities, uniting gun owners and non-gun owners alike, to take action, not sides, and end America's gun violence epidemic. Our organization today carries the name of Jim Brady, who was shot and severely injured in the assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan. Jim and his wife, Sarah, led the fight to pass federal legislation requiring background checks for gun sales. Brady continues to uphold Jim and Sarah's legacy by uniting Americans from coast to coast, red and blue, young and old, liberal and conservative, to combat the epidemic of gun violence.

Gun violence is an epidemic, both nationwide and in the state of Colorado. Since 1980, well over 20,000 people have died from gun violence in Colorado, and in 2019 alone, 836 were killed as a result of a firearm.<sup>1</sup> Colorado, like the rest of the country, experienced a steep increase in firearms purchasing over the last year. In 2020, 49 percent *more* firearms were sold in Colorado compared to 2019. **The need for a coordinated and strategic response to the gun violence crisis is clear, and this is why the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence strongly urges the favorable passage of HB21-1299, which would establish the Office of Gun Violence Prevention in the state of Colorado.**

This office would not only coordinate and promote efforts to reduce gun violence, but would also help to ensure education of the general public on state and federal laws and existing resources related to gun violence prevention. Further, it would help to establish and administer a grant program to fund initiatives focused on interrupting cycles of gun violence through evidence-based programs. Together, these concerted efforts will save lives in Colorado.

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<sup>1</sup> Colorado Ceasefire, "Statistics: Gun Violence in Colorado," <https://www.coloradoceasefire.org/>.

## **Supporting Education on Gun Violence Prevention Policies, Processes and Resources**

Widespread education on the gun violence prevention policies, processes, and resources in Colorado is key to their effectiveness and to saving lives. Many Colorado communities are at unique risk for gun violence, yet do not have the resources or tools to prevent it. It is similarly important to ensure that gun owners have the information necessary to ensure that they are complying with all state and federal laws.

HB21-1299 will create fuller public awareness of gun violence laws and resources for prevention through various means and media, using culturally competent methods to make sure all state residents can have access to life-saving information. The importance of public education and awareness on these policies like Extreme Risk and safe storage laws, alongside how to access mental health and substance abuse resources, cannot be overstated.

As just one example, Colorado's Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) law holds an immense amount of promise but is not currently being implemented to its fullest potential. Extreme risk laws are evidence-based gun violence prevention tools that have proven to be effective<sup>2</sup> across the country since they can address numerous forms of gun violence before that violence occurs. They work by allowing law enforcement or a family member to petition before a civil court to temporarily remove firearms from a person in crisis who is threatening to harm themselves or others.

Here are just a few examples of how ERPOs were used in Colorado in 2020:

- A Denver man's guns were removed after he plotted to kill state Attorney General Phil Weiser and threatened many other public officials;<sup>3</sup>
- A woman in Arapahoe County petitioned for an ERPO for her husband after he threatened to harm himself and purchased a firearm on multiple occasions. Both the husband and wife credit Colorado's ERPO law with saving his life;<sup>4</sup>
- Douglas County sheriffs removed 59 guns and 50,000 rounds of ammunition from the home of a man who was experiencing delusions and threatened violence against himself and numerous other people;<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey W. Swanson et al., *Criminal Justice and Suicide Outcomes with Indiana's Risk-Based Gun Seizure Law*, 47 J. AM. ACAD. PSYCHIATRY & L. 1 (2019); Jeffrey W. Swanson et al., *Implementation and Effectiveness of Connecticut's Risk-Based Gun Removal Law: Does it Prevent Suicides*, 80 L. & CONTEMP. PROBS. 179 (2017).

<sup>3</sup> Marshall Zelinger, *Year 1 of Colorado's red flag gun control law, by the numbers*, 9 News (Jan. 5, 2021), <https://www.9news.com/article/news/local/next/colorados-red-flag-gun-control-law-by-the-numbers-2020/73-787ac25f-98a9-4073-b9fe-5cef8b75d41b>.

<sup>4</sup> Elise Schmelzer and Shelly Bradbury, *Colorado's red flag law is one year old. Here's who's using the law to confiscate guns — and why.*, The Denver Post, (Jan. 10, 2021), <https://www.denverpost.com/2021/01/10/red-flag-law-colorado-first-year-2020-stats/>.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

- A young Boulder man was prohibited from buying firearms thanks to an ERPO law after he posted online that he wanted to buy an AR-15 and kill women at a sorority house.<sup>6</sup>

It is evident that ERPOs are important in empowering communities to promote public safety and prevent numerous forms of deadly tragedies - suicide, interpersonal violence, and mass shootings alike. Already in Colorado, this law has likely saved numerous lives. This law will help to ensure that all potential petitioners (and key community members who they interact with) are knowledgeable about the process and can bring an order before the court if necessary. The current ERPO process may not be well known or understood by some Coloradans, whether due to the fact that it's relatively new, or simply because the procedure may be intimidating to an individual without prior experience in court procedures. By providing education and awareness, this bill can normalize the steps and procedures and make them accessible to all. HB21-1299 will work to make this happen.

This is just one example of the type of education campaign and resource this bill would create. The Colorado legislature passed two critical pieces of gun violence legislation this session, both of which were signed into law by Governor Polis on April 19, 2021, and both of which will need a robust education campaign to be effective. HB 1106 and SB 78 create new regulations for how firearms must be stored in homes with minors, and create a requirement for gun owners to report lost and stolen firearms to law enforcement, respectively. It is critical that firearms owners are aware of the components and requirements enshrined in each of these laws to ensure that they are working to their full potential. Having an office of gun violence prevention to craft and disseminate information to a variety of constituencies to educate the general public will play a critical role in reducing preventable firearms injuries and deaths throughout the state of Colorado.

By working in tandem with other agencies, educational institutions, healthcare providers, law enforcement, and violence prevention organizations, the proposed Office of Gun Violence Prevention can optimize the best available tools, data, and policies to educate the public on best practices and methods of public safety.

### **Administration & Funding for Violence Prevention Programs**

The repercussions and lasting physical and mental impacts of gun violence in communities across Colorado cannot continue to go unchecked. Though not all communities are affected equally:<sup>7</sup> gun homicide rates for Hispanic Americans is more than double that of their white peers, and Black Americans are more than 11 times more likely than white Americans to die by gun homicides. Consequences of everyday gun violence in these communities stretch well beyond the victims of

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<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> The largest share of these deaths occur in urban communities - 80 percent of gun homicides occur in such areas. CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control's Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System, [cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html](https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html).

gun violence themselves. The pervasive nature of gun violence produces collective trauma<sup>8</sup> and communities disproportionately impacted by gun violence also bear numerous societal costs: depressed property values; lower rates of home ownership; fewer new retail and service businesses; diminished economic opportunities, such as prospects for career advancement; and lack of access to health care, healthy food, and social opportunities.<sup>9</sup>

One method to address community violence is through violence intervention & prevention programs that intervene to break cycles of violence in communities and address pressing needs of those who have been directly impacted by gun violence. They provide trauma-informed support and strengthen social relief systems by increasing opportunities for youth mentorship and employment, building healthy relationship support for families, and providing public spaces and infrastructure development for communal activities, thus preventing further instances of violence. These programs are on the frontlines of mitigating the gun violence epidemic in some of the nation's most disproportionately-impacted neighborhoods, but they need more resources and funding to scale their efforts and serve those who are most affected by gun violence on a daily basis.

HB21-1299 directs the office to identify and support the most effective community-based initiatives that use evidence-based strategies and focus on communities identified as having the highest risk of perpetrating or being victimized by gun violence in the near future. The office may then award grants to the programs identified to support their efforts to break cycles of violence and identify those at highest risk for gun violence victimization or perpetration to address unmet social needs. By funding these programs and directly addressing root causes of gun violence, this bill can combat the dire threat of pervasive firearm violence in communities.

## **Conclusion**

The Office of Gun Violence Prevention would educate the public about gun violence laws and solutions, create and coordinate a grant program for community violence intervention programs, and work in close concert with private and public sectors to implement state firearms laws with varied constituencies. The complex nature of the gun violence epidemic requires coordinated and effective solutions. For these reasons, **Brady joins in calling for the establishment of the Office of Gun Violence Prevention in Colorado by passing HB 21-1299.**

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<sup>8</sup> THOMAS ABT, BLEEDING OUT: THE DEVASTATING CONSEQUENCES OF URBAN VIOLENCE: A BOLD NEW PLAN FOR PEACE IN THE STREETS (2019)

<sup>9</sup> Hugh Richard Waters, Ph.D., et al., *The Costs of Interpersonal Violence – An International Review*, 73 HEALTH POL. 303 (2004).

Written testimony as prepared for submission in support of **HB21-1299 Office of Gun Violence Prevention** in the Senate State, Veterans, & Military Affairs Committee by Erica Manoatl, Manager of Research Initiatives at the Colorado Children's Campaign

May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021

- Thank you, Madam Chair, Mr. Vice Chair and members of the committee.
- My name is Erica Manoatl and I work as the Manager of Research Initiatives at the Colorado Children's Campaign where we fight for every chance for every child.
- The Children's Campaign supports this bill because gun violence has become too prevalent in our state and has significant negative impacts on the health and well-being of our children.
- In Colorado, child gun injuries, deaths and suicides have increased substantially in recent years: 254 Colorado kids and teens died due to firearm injuries between 2013 and 2017.
- Firearms are often used in instances of youth suicide. Between 2003-2007 and 2013-2017, firearm suicides among Colorado youth increased by nearly 80 percent, and the overall teen suicide rate in Colorado has reached some of the highest levels on record in recent years.
- Even children who are not directly injured by guns are affected by gun violence, as firearm tragedies create community-wide trauma and toxic stress. Nationally, many youth witness gun violence against others in their families or communities, and a majority of high school students worry about experiencing a shooting themselves.
- An office dedicated to the prevention of gun violence would be a welcome resource to further our efforts to create a state where all children can thrive. Through public awareness and collaboration with other state agencies, this office will serve as an essential complement to the existing state and federal laws around gun safety. Through data collection and research, this office will allow us to understand the nature of gun violence in our state further, including which communities are most affected and available evidence-based tools to prevent gun violence.
- Thank you, and we ask that you support HB1299

## HB21-1299 OFFICE OF GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Testimony of Keith Emerson, May 25, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB21-1299, "Concerning Establishing an Office of Gun Violence Prevention...".

Before I begin with suggested changes I'd like to point out to you the Opinion article in today's Wall Street Journal titled "It's 'Open Season' in Minneapolis". The writer claims that in that city shootings are up 153% over last year, with black people (emphasis on "people") representing three-quarters of the victims. Crimes are up in Colorado too. To claim that these increases in violence are due to or even affected by the restrictions passed by this legislature in 2021 is ludicrous. Please don't pass further restrictions on the rights of regular firearm owners, like the preemption bill to allow Boulder to virtue signal or this bill that really isn't needed. With that preamble:

With that in mind please consider withdrawal of this bill or, at a minimum, a major re-write. Suggested modifications include:

First, I hope that the bill is mistitled. The office being created should not be specialized for only violence associated with an inanimate object like a firearm. Do we need an office for car violence? Broaden your view! For example, when you look at states where suicide by firearm has dropped because of various laws, the total suicides of young males is much more of a mixed bag with either no or only a slight decrease. As Ron Dietz, who has testified before this committee on other firearm related bills noted, his own son, denied access to a firearm, committed suicide by asphyxiation. Although some groups are narrowly focused on violence when a firearm is used, this new organization should be looking at the big picture. Drop the word "Gun".

Second, there is disagreement as to what exactly constitutes "gun violence." An August 312020 email from Moms Demand Action is titled. "Police Violence is Gun Violence." Some people do not consider suicide using a firearm as a tool to be "gun violence" either. A definition is needed of what the consensus is for this new office to focus on.

Third, this new group creates an overlap with existing organizations. For example, earlier this session HB21-1106 was passed to encourage safe firearm storage with an unfunded mandate to produce a safe storage campaign. The Department of Public Health and Environment's Office of Suicide Prevention was charged with this duty. Here you are creating an overlapping office with some funding. Shouldn't that funding go to the Office of Suicide Prevention's program? Overlaps should be eliminated from this new group's scope.

Fourth, there is a long list of considerations for providing grants, full of code words for specific locations and groups where the money is to go. This should be left to the new Office to make most of these decisions and then enumerate them in its required reporting. The legislature shouldn't micro-manage this aspect, especially since the money given out per grant is likely to

be small in the first two years of funding given the very large scope and that two new employees will be paid out of the first-year funding and three during the second year (Page 3 line 7). Come to think of it, even requiring a certain number of employees seems like micro-managing.

Fifth, if tracking of gun violence is to be done then tracking of criminal activity prevented by firearms should also be tracked. If grants for gun violence prevention education are given out then the option for grants to train new firearm owners to be knowledgeable should also be given. Let me add that as violence prevention is voluntary this additional category of grants should also be voluntary.

Thank you for your time.

Keith Emerson

Thank you Madam Chairwomen and committee members. My name is Jane Dougherty and I am representing myself. I am in support of HB21-1299 Office of Gun Violence Prevention.

This bill is very personal to me, my sister Mary was the brave school psychologist who gave her life at Sandy Hook trying to save her kids.

My sister should never have had to die by 5 bullets if the guns were never assessable, if they had either been locked up, which they were not or had been removed, they were not.

After my sister's murder I got involved in trying to prevent other families from losing a loved one to gun violence. In my work I learned that Connecticut had a red flag law. It was passed in 1999, one of the first. It was passed after the lottery mass shooting in CT in 1998.

I asked the Sandy Hook survivors I had met why was this law not used? I was told because no one knew about it!

I do not know if anyone would have stopped this massacre that took my sister's life and the other 25 souls at Sandy Hook. Yet removing guns from a dangerous person does save lives.

We also do not know if our ERPO law could have prevented the Boulder massacre, but I do know that our life saving laws can not help families if they do not know about them.

I worked extremely hard for two years to help pass our ERPO law, The Zackari Parrish III Gun Violence Prevention Act. I believe in this law that has already saved lives. Maybe if the Boulder shooter's family had been aware of it, 10 families would not be part of the club no one wants to belong.

Colorado has a gun violence problem. We must collect data to learn about gun violence in our state. We must promote public awareness and educate Coloradans about our life saving laws like ERPO, Safe Storage and Lost and Stollen to save more lives.

I will do what I can to help educate families to continue to honor my sister Mary.

Pass this bill so we can get to work. Thank you.



Senate State, Veterans, & Military Affairs

HB21-1299 Office Of Gun Violence Prevention

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Barbara Niederhoff For Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America	<p>Dear Senator Gonzales and members of the Committee,</p> <p>My name is Barbara Niederhoff, I live in Aurora, and I'm a volunteer with the Colorado chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America.</p> <p>I grew up the oldest of 5, helping raise my younger siblings in the economic quagmire of the 1970s, and later became a stay at home mom of 3, making sure my family could stay afloat in an uncertain world. Fiscal responsibility is my daily life. Every penny has a purpose. Often the best purpose is proactive: paying for regular car maintenance keeps us from shelling out for catastrophic repairs.</p> <p>With that in mind, I want to draw your attention to some outrageous and avoidable costs our government is shelling out for. Coloradans are now paying an estimated 170 million tax dollars per year in response to gun violence. This reflects taxpayer expense only – it does not include the much larger costs to families and society in general.</p> <p>This 170 million dollars includes first responders, investigations, prosecution and other court-related costs, and huge amounts for incarceration. We are also losing tax revenue for every Coloradan unable to earn or spend due to incarceration, or major injury, or death.</p> <p>We now have the opportunity to cut these enormous, reactive costs with a very small, proactive investment in the Office of Gun Violence Prevention. By supporting proven, community-based violence intervention programming and bringing the focus to education, intervention, and other proactive measures to prevent gun violence, we will see major cost savings. Preventing even a fraction of gun violence incidents will more than pay for this office.</p> <p>We all want to lessen death and suffering. We also want the wisest use of our tax dollars. Vote yes on the Office of Gun Violence Prevention and we will accomplish both.</p> <p>Thank you very much for your attention.</p>
Kay Harmsen For Self	<p>Greetings. I support the development of a research body to curtail gun violence in Boulder County and the State of Colorado. As long time resident of Boulder (21 years) with two college-age sons, we say, enough is enough. This must stop. Establishing a gun violence research entity to to lend hope and safety to our community is paramount. We must eliminate egregious acts of senseless killing, Our communities must participate and take action.</p> <p>I support this bill, thank you for all you are doing to support keeping our community safe.</p> <p>Kay Harmsen</p>
Nicole LiaBraaten For	Dear Chair Gonzales and Committee,

<p>Moms Demand Action</p>	<p>I am writing today in support of the creation of an Office of Gun Violence Prevention.</p> <p>I believe that the Colorado legislature has done a good job leading on gun safety and passing common sense bills in the last few years. However, we hear frequently that in order for these legislative tools to be effective, the public and other stakeholders must be educated about them.</p> <p>We know that families are often the first to be aware that a loved one could be at risk of harming themselves and access to a firearm increases the risk of dying by suicide by three times. Additionally, for American children aged 1-19 firearms are the leading cause of death. We need to know and understand the specific risks these weapons pose to our youth and do more to help them achieve their dreams and contribute to Colorado’s future. Gun violence looks different across the state, and we know that the risk to Colorado’s black and brown children in Denver vs. white children in Greeley is quite different.</p> <p>An Office of Gun Violence Prevention will be able to collect data from our various Colorado communities and create targeted responses through education.</p> <p>One of the exciting aspects of the bill is the opportunity for community groups who work in gun violence prevention programs to get the support they so desperately need to have more reach and impact. An Office of Gun Violence Prevention can assess the risks, offer different responses and leverage the community groups who are on the ground and already making a difference in this arena.</p> <p>We can all agree that creating safer communities, free from gun violence, is an important action to take. Utilizing an Office of Gun Violence Prevention will help Colorado tackle the public safety response that best protects our varied communities from the varied forms of gun violence that are all deserving of attention.</p> <p>Thank you for your thoughtful consideration. Sincerely, Nicole LiaBraaten Volunteer Lead Boulder Group Moms Demand Action</p>
<p>Anne Becher For Self</p>	<p>I am writing to express my support for HB21-1299, to create an office of Gun Violence Protection. Like many other Boulder and Colorado residents in the wake of the tragic shooting at Boulder’s Table Mesa King Soopers, I recommitted myself to learning more about gun violence and working against it. From what I have learned, the solution will</p>

	<p>come in the form of multiple intertwined approaches, among them limitations on gun purchases, limitations on the types of guns and accessories available, attention to those who have histories of violent behavior, and public education on the issue. With its focus on education, research and support, HB21-1299 seems like a critical component of the suite of gun violence prevention bills that are currently being considered by the Colorado legislature. The Denver Post's May 8 article on this topic (<a href="https://www.denverpost.com/2021/05/08/gun-policy-laws-colorado-boulder-federal-research/">https://www.denverpost.com/2021/05/08/gun-policy-laws-colorado-boulder-federal-research/</a>) cites experts who understand the importance of research on the complex topic of gun violence and safety and express hope that this bill will pass. I hope you will vote in favor of HB21-1299; it is a potent complement to its companion bills to close gun purchase loopholes (HB21-1298) and give localities the ability to adopt gun laws that fit their particular needs (SB21-256).</p>
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