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Testimony by Rev. Dr. Annie Ricker in Opposition to HCR 5020 – Constitutional Amendment
House Fed & State Affairs Committee, Rep. Will Carpenter, chair
January 23, 2024

Mr. Chair, Members of the Committee:

My name is Rev. Dr. Annie Ricker; I am a resident of Topeka and serve as Board Chair of Kansas Interfaith Action, a statewide, multifaith issue-advocacy organization that “puts faith into action” by educating, engaging and advocating on behalf of people of faith and the public regarding critical social and economic justice issues.

One of KIFA’s core mission areas is gun violence. The people of faith who make up KIFA support sensible gun legislation that would address the epidemic of gun violence that besets our state and our country. We have testified before this committee many times in the past against efforts to loosen gun laws and regulations - mostly unsuccessfully, unfortunately. The results we have long predicted – that more guns will equal more gun violence, more guns used in domestic abuse, and more suicides – are indeed coming to pass.

Kansans suffer gun violence at rates above the national average, and guns are the leading cause of death among kids and teens in Kansas. My own city of Topeka reached a record 35 homicides last year. Parents, grandparents and even hunters and other gun owners want laws that would keep guns out of the hands of dangerous individuals. Conversely, this amendment could allow convicted felons and domestic abusers to own guns, a sure threat to the safety of all Kansans. This is not hypothetical: when similar amendments passed in other states, convicted felons and domestic abusers sued for access to guns. It would also undermine federal government attempts to regulate or eliminate rogue and off-market products, such as armor-piercing bullets, dummy guns, bump stocks, etc.

Pastors hold this issue very closely, because we are the ones who have to sit with families after a suicide, after an accident, or after a shooting in a school, bar or parking lot.

The denominations KIFA works are on record in support of what we call “gunsense” legislation. My own United Methodist Church included a statement in our Book of Resolutions called, “Our Call to End Gun Violence” in 2016. The link is included in my written testimony, and I encourage you to read it. It says,

As followers of Jesus, called to live into the reality of God's dream of shalom as described by Micah, we must address the epidemic of gun violence so "that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in God's paths." Therefore, we call upon United Methodists to prayerfully address gun violence in their local context.¹

It is time to step back from the road of endless gun violence. We can protect the Second Amendment and pass and enforce sensible gun regulations. The first step would be to do the sensible thing and vote down this dangerous and unnecessary amendment.

Thank you for your attention.

¹ <https://www.umc.org/en/content/book-of-resolutions-our-call-to-end-gun-violence>