

KANSAS MENTAL HEALTH COALITION

An Organization Dedicated to Improving the Lives of Kansans with Mental Illnesses

Testimony presented to the House Federal and State Affairs Committee
Support HB 2379

March 13, 2025

Chairman Kessler and Members of the Federal and State Affairs Committee,

KMHC supports HB 2379 requiring the Kansas bureau of investigation to establish a Kansas voluntary do-not-sell firearms list to prevent the purchase of firearms by any person who voluntarily registers to be placed on the list.

In Utah, Virginia, and Washington state, people in crisis can add themselves to a so-called “do not sell” list, which prevents them from buying firearms for a period of months or years. In 2023, 55% of suicides in the U.S. involved a firearm.

Nearly 7 out of every 10 Veteran deaths by suicide are the result of firearm injuries. Department of Veterans Affairs (2021) Studies reveal that making lethal means less accessible reduces death by suicide by 91%. Additionally, 90% of individuals who survive a nonfatal suicide attempt do not attempt again.

Research shows that many individuals who have experienced a suicidal crisis indicated that it lasted only a matter of minutes. Contrary to popular belief, if a person experiencing a suicidal crisis can’t access the method they planned to use, they generally do not seek out other lethal means to attempt suicide.

This legislation is similar to the Kansas Voluntary Exclusion Program (VEP) for problem gamblers that allows problem gamblers to acknowledge that they have a gambling problem and to prevent further harm to themselves by joining a self-exclusion list monitored by Kansas casinos.

Reducing access to lethal means is a strategy embraced by the U.S. Army, that recommends prevention strategies like “Pause to Protect” - a lethal means safety initiative that works with local gun shops, particularly those near military installations, to offer secure storage options to service members. The Army also recommends involving family members to voluntarily remove lethal means from the home during periods of crisis.

The study “Means Restriction for Suicide Prevention” published in Lancet, 2018, states “Limitation of access to lethal methods used for suicide—so-called means restriction—is an important population strategy for suicide prevention. Many empirical studies have shown that such means restriction is effective. Although some individuals might seek other methods, many do not; when they do, the means chosen are less lethal and are associated with fewer deaths than when more dangerous ones are available.”

Please support HB 2379 and advance the collaboration of the KBI, legislators and suicide prevention advocates to implement this important voluntary tool for Kansans. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. Please feel free to contact me at any time to discuss these issues further.

Amy A. Campbell, Kansas Mental Health Coalition, PO Box 4744, Topeka, KS 66604 785-969-1617