

Honorable Chair Kessler, Vice Chair Schmoie, Ranking Minority Member Miller, and fellow members of the Federal and State Affairs Kansas House Committee,

Re: House Bill 2379

*A Bill Requiring the Kansas Bureau of Investigation to Establish a Kansas Voluntary Do-Not-Sell Firearms List, so as to prevent the purchase of firearms by any person who voluntarily registers to be placed on the list.*

I respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 2379. This is a critical piece of legislation, that will create an avenue for members of our community struggling with suicide ideation or who are at risk of suicidality to create guardrails of protection for themselves, should they so choose to.

This bill directs the Kansas Bureau of Investigation to establish a completely voluntary and at will Kansas do-not-sell firearms list, to prevent the purchase of firearms by any person who voluntarily registers to be placed on the list. Experts in treating individuals struggling with suicidality, and data on suicide prevention, know that the decision to act on a suicidal thought can be impulsive, and that the deadlier the tool or attempt, the more likely the individual will not survive. Studies have shown that an interruption in the thought and the impulsive action can be enough to stop the individual from acting. Thus, buying an individual time from the thought and the ability to take action, can save lives.

This bill directly addresses the need to give an individual a means to “buy themselves” lifesaving time. Currently, individuals who struggle with diagnoses such as Major Depressive Disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or treatment resistant Depression, or who a struggling through a crises life event such as unemployment, are unable to restrict themselves from immediate access to a weapon. Such conditions are treatable, but may continue throughout an individual’s life, and come with times of acute distress. Individuals who are doing their best to treat these conditions, to beat these conditions, would be aided by the ability to self-restrict their own access to a deadly weapon for an enough amount to time to interrupt the critical period between initial thought and action.

Should an individual elect to place themselves on this list, it is not a permanent placement, and it is fully within the control of the individual themselves. They may, at any time, remove themselves from the list, should they feel their condition is managed and the risk to themselves is no longer an issue. However, the forty-eight-hour delay in removing themselves from the list gives them the security of knowing that in an acute deadly instance, they cannot step into a gun store, purchase a gun, and end their life immediately upon having the thought to do so.

I believe that this bill will help save lives.

Suicide is a major public health issue that impacts families, communities, and the state. The ripple effects of a single suicide create untold amounts of grief for loved ones, friends, and community members such as educators, health professionals, and first responders.

There are very few methods of prevention that are as effective as limiting access. Families with members who have a history of suicidality know that to keep their family member safe they can install locks on medicine cabinets, remove easy access to knives, and keep guns stored safely with ammunition stored separately. But there is nothing to prevent their loved one from purchasing a gun immediately upon the thought of doing so.

There are of course, many avenues via which an individual may attempt. But none are as deadly and consequential as unfettered, immediate access to a firearm. Groups at high risk for suicide include Veterans, Farmers, and men in rural areas, groups that include a number of Kansans. Even if only one Kansan utilizes the list, the peace of mind it may provide them and their loved ones is worth your vote today.

I urge support of this bill, on behalf of the Kansans at risk, and on behalf of their families who would do anything to help their loved one buy time.

Thank you for your time and consideration.