

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 2501

January 29, 2026

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

KMHC supports HB 2501 to provide for immunity from civil liability to federal firearms licensees for returning a firearm to the firearm owner at the termination of a firearm hold

A May 2024 survey of a nationally representative sample of US adults found that decreasing concerns and installing lockers within firearm retailers may increase the willingness of firearm owners to voluntarily, temporarily consider out-of-home storage for their firearms.

Of 3146 US adults who live in a home with a firearm, 41.38% were willing to store with retailers and 34.09% with law enforcement agencies, with similar demographic patterns and concerns for both storage resources; 22.24% of all participants reported increased willingness to store with retailers if lockers were installed. (Owner Willingness to Temporarily Store Firearms With Firearm Retailers and Law Enforcement Agencies; *Jennifer Paruk, PhD; Erin Wright-Kelly, DrPH; Leslie Barnard, DrPH, et al*; <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2836421?>)

COLORADO EXAMPLE

The Gun Shop Project, started in New Hampshire in 2009, is a project where public health agencies work with firearm businesses to promote firearm safety and suicide prevention. The focus is on limiting access to firearms for people at risk of suicide. In Colorado, the project is run by the Colorado Office of Suicide Prevention and Western Slope Veterans Coalition, and it covers all counties in the state.

In 2016, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, the largest suicide prevention organization in the United States, and the National Shooting Sports Foundation, the trade association for the firearms industry, partnered to create and share materials about suicide prevention and firearms for firearm businesses, shooting ranges, and firearm owners.

The Pause to Protect program was created by the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus with support from the U.S. Department of Defense Suicide Prevention Office and the Face the Fight Coalition. The program focuses on reducing all types of firearm-related harms, not only suicide, and gives firearm businesses tools to make it easier to provide education or services to their customers. This includes offering temporary on-site firearm storage or discounts on locking devices for secure firearm storage at home. The program builds on the Gun Shop Project and helps firearm businesses deal with common problems like operational issues, liability concerns, talking about suicide, lack of space, and high costs. (<https://cdphe.colorado.gov/colorado-gun-violence-prevention-resource-bank/prevention-and-intervention-approaches/firearm>)

- Firearm businesses can access free tools and resources from the Pause to Protect program. These resources help businesses provide education and services about safe firearm storage to prevent all

firearm-related harms. The program offers temporary firearm storage options, educational materials for customers, and services for distributing locking devices.

- The Colorado Firearm Safety Coalition has a map of all firearm businesses (and law enforcement agencies) that provide on-site firearm storage services.
- The Pause to Protect program has a national map of businesses that provide firearm storage.
- Research also shows that temporary firearm storage is in demand. One study found that half of firearm businesses in eight U.S. states, including Colorado, received requests to temporarily store firearms in the last year. (<https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2017.304013>)
- Another study showed that more than a quarter of firearm owners in Colorado and Washington state had stored a firearm outside their home in the past five years. (<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s40621-023-00426-9>)

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 2501 and advance the collaboration of the licensed firearms dealers, 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.

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