

June 1, 2022

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Commerce  
Justice, and Science  
Room S-128, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Commerce  
Justice, and Science  
Room S-128, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Matt Cartwright  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Commerce  
Justice, and Science  
Capitol Building H-310  
Washington, DC, 20515

The Honorable Robert Aderholt  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Commerce  
Justice, and Science  
Capitol Building H-310  
Washington, DC, 20515

Dear Chairwoman Shaheen, Ranking Member Moran, Chairman Cartwright, and Ranking Member Aderholt,

On behalf of the undersigned national, state, and local organizations dedicated to protecting the health and safety of Americans across the nation, as you begin work on the Fiscal Year 2023 Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations Bill, we urge you to include funding under the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) for states, tribes, and localities to improve implementation of existing State extreme risk protection order (ERPO) laws as a safety means to prevent suicides.<sup>1</sup>

Nationally, suicide is the tenth leading cause of death for Americans and the second national leading cause of death for youth and veterans,<sup>2</sup> with 130 Americans dying by suicide each day.<sup>3</sup> 51% of these suicides are completed by the means of firearms.<sup>4</sup> However, these deaths can be prevented, as 3 in 4 individuals with suicidal ideations show a warning sign or tell someone.<sup>5</sup> Recent studies of existing laws have shown that 70% of ERPOs are for suicidal ideations,<sup>6</sup> and 1 in 10 orders prevents a suicide.<sup>7</sup> In turn, proper implementation of ERPOs provides an opportunity for law enforcement to intervene to prevent tragedy.

Currently 20 states and the District of Columbia have enacted a version of an ERPO law,<sup>8</sup> but a lack of resources and education hinders the proper implementation that can save lives of both the individuals subject to these orders and law enforcement. Implementation of best practices includes training for law enforcement, judges, and support staff on safe, effective, and efficient means to implement these orders; creating multidisciplinary teams to help intervene and enact the orders; and improving infrastructure to streamline filing and ERPO resolution. With a seed federal investment of \$21 million dollars for a pilot grant to states and localities, law enforcement and court personnel can receive training and technical assistance, states can enact statewide coordination, and up to 45 jurisdictions across the nation can create

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<sup>1</sup> Kivisto AJ & Phalen PL (2018). Effects of risk-based firearm seizure laws in Connecticut and Indiana on suicide rates, 1981–2015. *Psychiatric Services*.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention. 2020 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report. 2020. Retrieved February 8, 2022 from [https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/datasheets/2020/2020\\_National\\_Veteran\\_Suicide\\_Prevention\\_Annual\\_Report\\_508.pdf](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/datasheets/2020/2020_National_Veteran_Suicide_Prevention_Annual_Report_508.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> "Suicide Statistics," American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, February 8, 2022, <https://afsp.org/suicide-statistics/>

<sup>4</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. About Underlying Cause of Death, 1999-2020.

<sup>5</sup> Robins, E., Gassner, S., Kayes, J., Wilkinson, R.H. & Murphy, G.E. (1959). The communication of suicidal intent: A study of 134 consecutive cases of successful (completed) suicide. *Am J Psychiatry*, 115 (8), 724-733.

<sup>6</sup> Zeoli AM, Paruk J, Branas CC, Carter PM, Cunningham R, Heinze J, & Webster DW. (2021). Use of extreme risk protection orders to reduce gun violence in Oregon. *Criminology & Public Policy*; Swanson JW, et al. (2019). Criminal justice and suicide outcomes with Indiana's risk-based gun seizure law. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*.

<sup>7</sup> Swanson JW, et al. (2019). Criminal justice and suicide outcomes with Indiana's risk-based gun seizure law. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*.

<sup>8</sup> Frattaroli S, Sharfstein JM. (2021). Extreme risk protection orders — A tool for clinicians to prevent gun violence. *JAMA Health Forum*.

multidisciplinary teams, including professionals or specialists trained in crisis intervention, within their local law enforcement units to help Americans in crisis before tragedy strikes.

By empowering states, tribes, and localities to effectively implement existing laws, we can strengthen our state and locality-led suicide prevention efforts and better equip our judges and law enforcement with the tools to save lives. We urge you to include this request within the upcoming package.

Sincerely,

2020 Mom	Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance
American Academy of Pediatrics	Mental Health America
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Work	Mom Congress
American Association of Suicidology	National Association of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors (NAADAC), the Association for Addiction Professionals
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention	National Alliance for Mental Illness
American Medical Women’s Association	National Association for Behavioral Healthcare
American Psychiatric Association	National Association for Children’s Behavioral Health
American Psychological Association	National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
Anxiety and Depression Association of America	National Association of Social Workers
Association of Prosecuting Attorneys	National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
Baltimore Crisis Response, Inc.	National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Battered Women’s Justice Project, National Research Center on Domestic Violence and Firearms	National Federation of Families
Carlsbad Battered Families Shelter	National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder	National Organization for People of Color Against Suicide, Inc.
Doctors for America	National Register of Health Service Psychologists
Eating Disorders Coalition	National Recourse Center on Domestic Violence and Firearms
Esperanza United	
Fort Lauderdale Police Department	

Girls Inc.

Global Alliance for Behavioral Health  
and Social Justice

Indiana Coalition Against  
Domestic Violence, Inc.

Inseparable

International Society for Psychiatric  
Mental Health Nurses

Johns Hopkins Anxiety Disorders Clinic

Johns Hopkins Center for Gun  
Violence Solutions

King County Prosecuting Attorney's  
Office-Regional Domestic Violence Firearms  
Enforcement Unit (Washington State)

Major Cities Chiefs Association

March For Moms

Maryland Network Against  
Domestic Violence, Inc.

Maryland Psychiatric Society

No Health Without Mental Health

Psychotherapy Action Network

Residential Eating Disorders Consortium

Repro Psych Trainees, Harvard University

Recovery Innovations International, Inc.

Sandy Hook Promise

Shades of Blue Project

Self-Management and Recovery Training  
(SMART Recovery)

The Jed Foundation

Trust for America's Health

University of Michigan Institute for  
Firearm Injury Prevention

Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence  
Action Alliance

Washington County Mental Health Authority

Well Being Trust

Whitney/Strong