

February 13, 2019

The Honorable Robert Renny Cushing
Chair
House Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee
New Hampshire House of Representatives
LOB Room 207, 107 North Main Street
Concord, NH 03301

The Honorable Mel Myler
Chair
House Education Committee
New Hampshire House of Representatives
LOB Room 207, 107 North Main Street
Concord, NH 03301

Re: AMA support for legislation to prevent firearm-related injuries and deaths

Dear Chairs Cushing and Myler:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and medical student members, I am writing to express our support for legislation that will address the epidemic of firearm violence in New Hampshire and across the country. With more than 38,000 deaths each year, gun violence is a serious public health crisis. Recent studies have shown that deaths by firearms are at their highest levels in decades and have become the second leading cause of death for children. Tragically, these deaths are entirely preventable.

As physicians, we see firsthand the carnage resulting from gun violence, as well as the long-term consequences for individuals, their families, and their communities. In addition to the direct impact to victims and their families and friends, firearm-related violence has broader societal and economic impacts on medical and mental health care systems, communities, workplaces, schools, police, and the criminal justice system. As advocates for our patients and stewards of the public health, we are committed to preventing gun violence. We believe that the epidemic of gun violence requires comprehensive, multi-faceted public health solutions and that the following bills represent important elements of such an approach. We urge you to pass these bills.

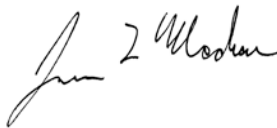
- House Bill 564 (H.B. 564): legislation to prohibit possession of firearms in safe school zones. The AMA believes that schools should be safe havens for children and advocates for schools to remain gun-free zones except for school-sanctioned activities and professional law enforcement officers. Though the federal Gun-Free School Zones Act prohibits possession of a firearm in a school, the legislation contains a dangerous loophole that exempts individuals licensed by the state to possess a firearm. H. B. 564 would rightly close this loophole and help keep schoolchildren and educators safe.

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- House Bill 109: legislation to require commercial firearm sales and transfers to be subject to a criminal background check and processed through a licensed firearms dealer. The AMA advocates a background check for all firearm purchasers and believes such safeguards are necessary to prevent certain prohibited purchasers, such as convicted felons and domestic abusers, from accessing guns.
- House Bill 514: legislation to impose a seven-day waiting period between the purchase and delivery of a firearm. The AMA supports legislation establishing a waiting period of at least one week before purchasing any form of firearm. Waiting periods are important safeguards that allow enough time for thorough background checks and prevent against impulsive acts of violence. Waiting periods are particularly relevant to the prevention of suicide, which is often contemplated and acted out impulsively in a matter of minutes or hours.
- House Bill 687: legislation to establish extreme risk protection orders. The AMA supports the establishment of laws allowing family members, intimate partners, household members, and law enforcement personnel to petition a court for the temporary removal of a firearm from individuals at high or imminent risk of harming self or others. This important legislation will empower the people who are most likely to know when a loved one is at risk and enable them to prevent tragedies from occurring.

It is imperative that we address gun violence as a public health problem and work together to develop effective violence prevention strategies. The legislation pending before your committees takes important steps toward that goal and will save lives. We thank you for the opportunity to express our support for these bills. If the AMA can be of assistance, please contact Annalia Michelman, JD, AMA Advocacy Resource Center, at annalia.michelman@ama-assn.org or (312) 464-4788.

Sincerely,



James L. Madara, MD

cc: New Hampshire Medical Society