

Testimony of Mary Sherman
North Dakota State Capitol - House Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Coteau AB
January 30th, 2025, 2:30 PM

Good afternoon Chairman Porter, Committee members, and staff. Thank you for hearing my testimony today.

My name is Mary Sherman

I am Mary Sherman. I have lived in North Dakota my entire 74 years. I also taught in the West Fargo school district for 21 years. My experience leads me to emphasize the danger of passing a bill, such as HB1411. I have always been a supporter of common sense gun laws. But the dangers became personal when I accompanied students to state speech tournament years ago. The tournament was held in a hotel and as students gathered to await their award ceremony, a television started showing what was happening in Columbine. In many ways, our world changed that day. Students no longer felt safe and knew tragedy could happen anywhere. I have also faced the situation of staring with students at an empty seat in my classroom because the student had committed suicide. Unfortunately, this happened on more than one occasion. My husband's family has also experienced the tragedy of suicide and the lasting impact it has on surviving family members. Therefore, I am testifying today in opposition to HB1411.

This bill poses several significant concerns. Suicide claims the lives of 89 people in North Dakota every year. This is a growing crisis in our state. We must address this crisis. Extreme Protection Orders are a common sense solution to this real problem which has already been adopted by 21 states and the District of Columbia and we know they work. In 11 years since Indiana passed this extreme risk law in 2005, the states firearm suicide rate decreased by 7.5%. Connecticut saw a 14% and it's firearm suicide rate.

The data shows that the difference between living to see a better day or dying by suicide is often determined by the presence of a gun. Research shows that access to a gun triples the risk of dying of suicide.

HB1411 would tie the hands of future legislatures who may want to save lives and take a research based approach to addressing suicide and common sense gun safety.

Encourage members to vote no on HB1411.