

Testimony Opposing House Bill 1411

I'm writing today to urge you to vote **DO NOT PASS on House Bill 1411**, which seeks to ban Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs) in North Dakota. ERPOs are a critical tool that can help prevent some of the most devastating forms of gun violence—suicides, domestic violence incidents, and mass shootings. This bill would eliminate an important, life-saving measure that provides time and space for individuals in crisis to seek the help they need, and I urge you to reconsider this harmful course of action.

ERPOs are a civil legal process that allows law enforcement officers and family members to petition the court to temporarily prevent an individual from purchasing or possessing firearms if there is evidence that they pose a significant risk of harm to themselves or others. This is not an action taken lightly. It involves the court system, provides due process, and is designed to be a preventive measure—an early intervention to stop a potential tragedy before it happens.

We know that the warning signs for suicide, domestic violence, and mass shootings often do not appear suddenly, and they don't always involve violent threats or overt behaviors. ERPOs provide a crucial opportunity to act when there are signs of escalating danger before the situation spirals into something much worse. In the case of suicides, for example, studies have shown that access to firearms significantly increases the risk of a person following through with their intent. Temporarily removing that access during a crisis can save lives. It's as simple as adding time and space between a person in emotional turmoil and lethal means.

Banning ERPOs would take away an important tool for preventing gun violence. Instead of creating more barriers to action, we should be looking at ways to expand and improve these tools, ensuring that families and law enforcement have the means to intervene and prevent tragedies from occurring. The goal here should be to protect lives, not to limit the ability of our communities to take proactive steps in the face of genuine concerns.

ERPOs are not a fix-all, but they are part of the broader solution to the complex issue of gun violence. It is a commonsense measure, supported by public health experts, law enforcement professionals, and families who have seen firsthand the dangers of allowing a person in crisis to maintain access to firearms.

I urge you to reject House Bill 1411. Banning ERPOs will only make it harder for North Dakotans to prevent gun violence in our communities. Let's not take a step backward in the effort to protect the safety of our loved ones and neighbors.

Thank you for your time and consideration.