

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION
HOUSE BILL No. 1411

Chairman Porter and Members of the Committee, my name is Lisa Hermosillo. I am an advocate that resides at Minot Air Force Base, and I am here today to ask that you **VOTE NO** on **HB 1411**.

I hold a bachelor's in psychology and have dedicated several years advocating for mental health awareness and bringing attention to suicide prevention both in my community and at Minot Air Force Base. Suicides occurring continues to climb, not just in our state but across our country. I have significant concerns that this bill will only put North Dakotans more at risk. Back in 2022, the Department of Defense directed an initiative and funded \$2.4 million dollars to devise a report on military suicide and prevention. On February 23rd, 2023, SPRIRC (Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee) released and published a 115-page report compiled of extensive research including a series of statistics, suicide prevention restructuring recommendations, and guidance for reducing access to lethal methods of suicide.

I have read through each and every page of this report and I'd encourage anyone who is dedicated to military and or veteran mental and behavioral health, to do so as well. Reports show that the number one chosen method of suicide both for the military and civilians is a firearm. The cold hard facts are that firearms continue to also be used in other very horrific acts of domestic violence, homicide, and mass shootings including at our schools.

The Air Force as part of the Integrated Resilience efforts boldly and effectively breaks down the Lethal Means Safety method. In their words, "Minutes Matter", and it is their goal to ensure measures are in place to make access to legal methods more difficult in order to save lives. This program has shown improvement and is supported.

Banning Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPO) will have devastating outcomes for not only victims of domestic violence, but also to our law enforcement officers and emergency response teams who routinely respond to many dangerous situations. Additionally, a Class B Felony is extreme in terms of a punishment. It seems we go out of way to lock up those who trying to save lives instead of focusing on public safety, well-being of our communities, and various healthcare professions directly impacted by these tragedies.

I ask you to take seriously the testimonies in opposition that you have received thus far and to do due diligence in your own research on domestic abuse deaths, homicides, and suicides. Twenty-one states have also implemented ERPO laws and have seen how effective they have been. We must take heartbreaking stories seriously and the pleas from survivors or those who have lost loved ones who tried to warn about dangerous persons. Just in the last year, how many women were killed from repeat domestic violence offenders? The signs were clearly there and ignored. Women, men, and children at the hand of their abusers, deserve better. Under this legislation, it would, in fact, protect their abusers.

I also want us to consider citizen's trust in law enforcement and their abilities to make judgment calls. If we trust law enforcement to use deadly force in order to save a life, then we should also trust them in their judgement to save lives by removing firearms. Their jobs are stressful enough, they don't need to face fear of a ten-year sentence for saving lives.

Far too often our DV/Involuntary Commitment orders fail and now we're looking to reduce more protections. We should be focusing on fixing the system for victims, not making it easier for violent offenders to hurt others.

I'm going to end with a few statistics. According to North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, outside of car accidents and health conditions, suicide is the next leading cause of death. In 2022, there were 184 suicides with 57.1% of those involving a firearm. Suicides have increased by 27.6% between the years of 2018 – 2022. The State of North Office of Attorney General in their Criminal Justice Statistics Special Report found that out of the total of homicides in 2023, 14 North Dakotans were killed with a firearm and of those 14, 5 were in result of domestic abuse. In 2023, the Department of Defense reported 14, 110 cases of domestic violence and a 12% increase of suicides, of which 65% involved a firearm. The total number of suicides was 523 in 2023. The state has also suffered 5 suicides among our law enforcement, three in Minot alone.

Additionally, I feel there is more to this bill that meets the eye than just the 2A aspect of it.

I believe it's important that there are 2A voices out there that also understand how crucial and lifesaving ERPO are for our citizens.

Thank you for your time,

Lisa Hermosillo

Sources and Literature

<https://attorneygeneral.nd.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2023-HomicideReport.pdf>

<https://www.hhs.nd.gov/sites/www/files/documents/BH/Suicide%20Prevention/Suicide-Prevention-Review-Commission-Report-web.pdf>

<https://media.defense.gov/2023/Feb/24/2003167430/-1/-1/0/SPRIRC-FINAL-REPORT.PDF>

<https://publichealth.jhu.edu/sites/default/files/2023-02/research-on-extreme-risk-protection-orders.pdf>

<https://www.ncgvr.org/events/gun-violence-prevention-webinar-series/red-flag-laws.html>

