

June 17, 2019

Good afternoon, Task Force Members.

My name is Nancy Jones, and I am a resident of Appleton and Outagamie County.

I am here to tell you the stories of three young people—all three middle class, educated, with loving families and friends, and with vibrant personalities. All three experienced moments of despair and attempted suicide. Two of these young people were dear friends of my children and were tragically lost. The third is a member of my own family who has lived for more than two decades beyond the suicide attempt, has earned two masters degrees, and has started a small business in our state.

The clear difference between the tragic stories and the successful life after a suicide attempt was the access to lethal means. Two young men with access to firearms were lost. My family member who did not have access to lethal means credits his survival to the fact that there was not a gun in the home.

In Outagamie County, there are two public health priorities—reducing obesity rates and suicide prevention. Families are urged to reduce access to lethal means—firearms, medications, and alcohol—when a loved one is experiencing a difficult mental health or substance use issue. You may be familiar with what is referred to as “The Lethal Triad”—Upset person, Firearms/Medication and Alcohol. When these three are present—the risk of violence is high. Reduce or remove any factor and risk drops significantly.

It is great advice, but in Wisconsin, it is not easy advice to follow in the case of firearms. I urge you to provide a mechanism to families for temporary removal of firearms by recommending the adoption of Extreme Risk Protective Order legislation to the full legislature. About a dozen states have <sup>instituted</sup> given this intervention tool that gives family members and law enforcement the means to ask a judge to temporarily prohibit a person from purchasing or possessing a firearm when the person is determined to be at credible risk of harming themselves.

- Over 75% of gun deaths in Wisconsin are by suicide.
- Suicide attempts involving guns are lethal 80-90% of the time, while 95% of those who attempt suicide using other methods will survive.

When our loved ones are in a crisis, we need to give them access to quality care, and remove access to lethal means.

In addition to the Extreme Risk Protective Order, I ask you recommend the re-instatement of the 48-hour waiting period for <sup>hand</sup> gun purchases to reduce access to lethal means in impulsive suicide attempts. There is evidence that people who die by suicide generally formulate a plan to kill themselves, and follow through on the first steps of that plan — whether going to the gun store or making other arrangements — *within 20 minutes* of making their initial decision. There is further evidence that a “cooling off period” allows time for the crisis to pass or help to be found for the distressing factors pushing someone to despair.

These are two very clear steps our state can take to safeguard our family members, friends, and neighbors in a matter of life and death. Please recommend these two measures to your legislative colleagues so there are more stories with happy outcomes our family has been able to enjoy and fewer families burdened with such tragic loss of loved ones.

Thank you.

Nancy Jones

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