

Good Afternoon,

Despite the red shirt, I'm here in multiple capacities today.

First, I'm here as the legislative lead for the Whitewater chapter of Moms Demand Action to request the task force recommend implementation of extreme risk protection orders (ERPOs) in WI.

I'm also here as a third generation gun violence survivor. ONE way I'm a gun violence survivor is through two great uncles who completed suicide by guns. One was a WWII veteran who died by suicide by gun on Christmas Eve. I can personally attest to this trauma reverberating through our family for decades.

In addition to being a parent of two children in a community where we have lost teen males to suicide in recent years, I am here as a professor of psychology and as a licensed school psychologist who prepares future school psychologists for their careers.

As a professor, I have had to conduct suicide risk assessment screenings with my own students more recently in recent years, but I want to focus on their work as school psychologists today.

I hold a document released by the National Association of School Psychologists, in which I serve a leadership role. This document is dated 2013. In 2013, NASP called on school psychologists to advocate for...Let me quote the document, "Review and revise as needed current policies and legislation addressing access to firearms by those who have the potential to cause harm to themselves or others". Six and a half years ago, NASP called us to action. Six and a half years, yet we're still requesting ERPOs in WI because we know, in states where they have been implemented, suicides and other gun violence have been prevented.

In the next two weeks in our university graduate education program, we'll be training our practicum students to conduct risk and threat assessments under supervision. These assessments include questions about access to weapons. In the 15 years I've done this work, I've seen this role for school psychologists increase exponentially.

But no matter how well we train them, school psychologists will be limited in their effectiveness in preventing suicides without ERPOs to also prevent access to the most lethal means of suicide and other gun violence.

As a mental health professional, I do not want to take rights from people who are struggling with mental wellness.

However, well written ERPO legislation TEMPORARILY...I'll repeat, TEMPORARILY limits access to firearms for those who pose an active risk of threat to themselves or others. There's evidence that ERPOs save lives. And I'm UNEQUIVOCALLY behind that!

Our school children are dying by suicide, often using parents' and family members' guns.

Their parents and loved ones are dying by suicide.

It's school psychologists and other educators and mental health professionals who are the ones attempting to heal that trauma in children as young as preschool and kindergarten.

Please help us to be more effective at preventing suicide by recommending and implementing ERPO legislation.

Thank you for your service on this essential committee.

And thank you for the opportunity to speak today.