

Testimony in Support of Kansas House Bill 2251
House Committee on Federal and State Affairs
March 24, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on Kansas House Bill 2251 (HB2251), which would create an enforcement mechanism to ensure convicted domestic abusers relinquish any firearms in their possession. My name is Janet Federico, and I offer this testimony as a concerned Kansan, a survivor of domestic violence, and a woman who lives every day with the trauma of staring down the barrel of the gun held by her abuser as he promised to kill her on not just one, but on three separate occasions.

Kansas already prohibits convicted domestic violence offenders from purchasing new weapons, however, a dangerous loophole has yet to be closed. The law does not yet require offenders to relinquish the firearms they already own.

Escaping domestic violence is already a dangerous endeavor. When you mix a firearm into the situation, a woman is five times more likely to be killed. In Kansas alone, 157 people were killed in domestic violence homicides between 2015 and 2019. And 59% of those domestic violence homicides involved a firearm.

Those are not just statistics for women like me who lived with an abuser who owned not just one but three pistols and two long rifles. I am intimately familiar with the barrel end of my ex-partner's Heckler & Koch .45 semiautomatic pistol. I'll never forget him standing over me and watching his finger twitch on the trigger as he decided whether he was going to let me live or die. This scene played out on two other occasions. When I finally escaped, it was with his promise to hunt me down and kill me; to "turn [me] off like a switch" when I wouldn't see it coming ringing in my ears.

In 2018, when I finally secured a Protection from Stalking and Harassment order against him, I'll never forget what went through my head when Judge Waller informed my ex-partner that he would not be able to purchase any firearms. I thought, "What's to stop him from killing me with a gun he already owns." The answer then, and the answer now, is there's nothing to stop him.

My abuser was so menacing and threatening to me in court that day, that the deputies present would not allow me to leave the courthouse without a police escort. They had to physically remove my abuser to the other side of the court as he continued to menace me and my new husband. Even still, when my husband and I went to leave with our escort, my ex-partner attempted to follow us and had to be restrained.

I spent the 72-hours that followed terrified that my ex-partner was going to make good on his promise to murder me. Had my ex-partner been required to relinquish any weapons he already owned, I would have been able to feel safer, sooner.

The passage of HB2251 would help enforce the current law by requiring abusers to turn in the weapons they already own, thereby protecting the targets of their abuse from further

terrorization and the threat of death. With this in mind, I urge the members of the committee to protect survivors of domestic violence and vote in favor of HB2251.

Respectfully submitted by:

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