

March 26, 2021

Dear Members of the House Fed & State Committee,

Thank you to the chair, vice chair and to the committee for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Amanda Winch. I am a lifelong Kansan who grew up in Wichita, KS and now reside in Overland Park, KS with my family. I am a parent of 2 young boys, an alumna of Kansas State University and I am also the volunteer Kansas Chapter Leader of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. We are a nonpartisan, grassroots gun violence prevention organization, dedicated to advancing policies that respect the Second Amendment and protect our communities from gun violence. I became involved with Moms Demand Action over 4 years ago because, as a new mother, I thought it was important to raise awareness about gun safety and felt that no parent should have to endure losing a child in such a senseless way.

On behalf of the thousands of Moms Demand Action supporters in the state of Kansas, we ask for your support on HB 2251. I recall in 2018 how both parties worked together to put the safety of their constituents first, and passed a common sense, bi-partisan bill which prohibits most domestic abusers from possessing firearms. This bill was signed into law by then Governor Colyer and several of you on this committee supported that bill. Now we are asking you to take another step to enforce the existing law and make sure that abusers do not have access to guns by requiring abusers to turn in any guns they may already have.

Every month, an average of 53 women are shot and killed by an intimate partner. Specifically, in Kansas, between 2015 and 2019, at least 157 people were killed in domestic violence homicides. We do not know the number of lives impacted by domestic violence yet in 2020, but we do know that domestic violence spikes during times of prolonged financial stress and Kansas lost more than 100,000 jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic. We also know that there has been a historic surge of gun sales during the pandemic, putting an unprecedented strain on our background system and increasing the likelihood that sellers would sell a gun to an abuser who should be denied because a background check took longer than 3 days.

It is our responsibility to our fellow Kansans to make every possible effort to ensure that women and children are safe from their abusers. The presence of a gun in a domestic violence situation makes it 5 times more likely that a woman will be killed and the circumstances of the pandemic have increased the likelihood that there are now more guns in domestic violence situations. Ensuring guns are removed from already prohibited abusers is just common sense and will save lives.

Passing HB 2251 would strengthen Kansas' existing gun laws and give law enforcement the tools they need to protect women and children. Please put safety first and support HB 2251. Thank you for your time.

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