



April 25, 2023

To: PA House Judiciary Committee

From: Adam Garber, CeaseFirePA Executive Director

RE: Vote Yes on Common Agenda Gun Safety Bill Package (HB 338, HB 714, HB 731 & HB 1018)

Dear Representative,

The House Judiciary Committee plans to vote on the Common Agenda to End Gun Violence (**HB 338, HB 714, HB 731 & HB 1018**), this Wednesday, which will be heading to the House floor for a vote sometime in the very near future. In advance of this critically important vote, CeaseFirePA, the Commonwealth's leading state-based gun violence prevention advocacy organization, urges you to vote **YES** on these very common sense and lifesaving measures.

Combined this package of legislation recognizes that no matter where you live in the Commonwealth, gun violence poses a significant risk to your life. And that it's preventable with appropriate tools:

- **HB 338** requires gun owners to report lost or stolen firearms to the police within 72 hours of noticing it missing or stolen. This structure only holds gun owners accountable if they willfully choose to not report the missing weapon. This policy is overwhelmingly supported by the local law enforcement community. During the House Judiciary Committee's recent hearing March 23, 2023, **York City Police Commissioner Michael Muldrow** testified "*the notion of not putting any emphasis and burden on (gun owners) to keep proper custody of their weapons just feels ridiculous.*" With more than 21 firearms being lost or stolen every day, Commissioner Muldrow also asserted that "*such a policy is not meant to force lawful gun owners to know where every one of their guns are at all times. However, such a policy would enable law enforcement to better distinguish between those who were genuine victims of theft and those who are willfully engaging in gun trafficking.*"
- **HB 714** requires a background check for every firearm sale. Under current law any individual (including those who are legally prohibited from possessing firearms), may purchase a long gun from a private seller without being required to undergo a background check. Semi-automatic rifles (long guns) have the potential to wreak a great deal more havoc and result in the loss of mass casualties. For this reason alone, the standard by which an individual can access a literal weapon of mass destruction should at the very least be on par with our Commonwealth's basic standard for purchasing a handgun.
- **HB 731** establishes safe storage requirements for firearm owners. It is estimated that more than half of all U.S. gun owners—including 55% of gun owners with children in the home—do not practice safe firearm storage. These firearms often find their way into youth with 80% of school shooters accessing firearms from the home of friends and family and 82% of adolescent firearm suicides involve a gun belonging to a family member. The **American Academy of Pediatrics**

recommends securing firearms with a locking device to prevent unintentional discharge and gun violence. Chester County Senior Deputy District Attorney Erin O'Brien shared stories about recent incidents in her county involving children who had accessed their parents' firearms and either killed or injured themselves due to the weapon not being properly stored. She expressed that *"her office fully supports safe storage legislation and urged committee members to take action on this policy as it will prove beneficial in helping to forestall the next firearm related injury, which is the leading cause of death among children and adolescents in the United States."*

1. Lastly, **HB 1018**, would create a legal framework for law enforcement and family members to prevent suicide and mass shootings before they happen through extreme risk protection orders (ERPOs). It empowers families or law enforcement officers to temporarily remove a person's access to firearms when they are believed to be likely to harm themselves or others. Over the last five years, 4,712 Pennsylvanians have died from suicide by gun—56% of all gun deaths in the Commonwealth. Studies in the 19 states that have enacted ERPO statutes have found a significant decrease in firearm suicide. And, there has been almost no reports of false ERPO claims.

The above-mentioned firearm safety bills are not only common sense in nature, but also has the broad support of our coalition members which are comprised of the local law enforcement community, gun violence survivors and the victim advocate community (The Pennsylvania Office of Victim Advocate), our veterans, medical professionals, and the vast majority of everyday Pennsylvanians. More importantly, these measures have been proven to save lives and reduce the proliferation of crime guns in our Commonwealth. Therefore, it is for these reasons that we ask for you to vote **YES** on these bills when they are brought up for consideration on the House floor.

In the interim, should you have any questions about this or other gun violence prevention policies, please reach out to our Deputy Director Brandon Flood (Brandon.Flood@ceasefirepa.org, 717-6232432).

Sincerely,

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