



CEASEFIREPA

ACTION

May 18, 2023

To: All House Members

From: Adam Garber, CeaseFirePA, Executive Director

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

Dear Representative,

As you may be aware, the following gun safety bills (**HB 338, HB 714, HB 731 & HB 1018**) will receive a final vote in the House chamber this coming session week. As such, in advance of this historical vote, CeaseFirePA, the Commonwealth's leading state-based gun violence prevention advocacy organization, urges you to vote **YES** on these lifesaving measures.

While we certainly do not view any of the House floor amendments that have been incorporated into these bills as adding anything significant in the way of increasing public safety, we believe that these amendments do not in any way undermine the original intent of the underlying legislation and that their impact upon related stakeholders will be largely de minimis. These legislative proposals are as follows:

- **HB 338, PN 1090** 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 on 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 in Pennsylvania on average, Commissioner Muldrow also asserted that "*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, PN 1050** 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 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 – and for that matter, the same standard currently used when purchasing the very same type of long gun from a licensed firearm dealer..

- **HB 731/PN 1091** 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 the hands of youth.80% of school shooters under age 18 access their firearms from the homes of friends and family.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. In addition, 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 unintentionally killed or injured themselves due to the weapon not being properly stored. She expressed to the House Judiciary Committee that *"my office fully supports safe storage legislation and I urge 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."*
- Lastly, **HB 1018, PN 1152** would create a legal framework for law enforcement and family members to prevent firearm suicides and mass shootings through Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs). It empowers immediate family members or law enforcement officers to petition a judge 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 (including in Florida and Indiana) have found a significant decrease in firearm suicide. In addition, in Florida, between 2018 and January of 2023, there were a total of 10,286 ERPO petitions granted – less than 6 percent of the petitions were denied by the courts. Of this 6 percent of denials, the courts did not make any determination that ERPO petitions had been weaponized or improperly used. .

The above-mentioned firearm safety bills are not sensible and lifesaving, but also have the broad support of our coalition members which are comprised of local law enforcement, gun violence survivors and the victims advocacy community, our veterans, medical professionals, and the vast majority of everyday Pennsylvanians. These stakeholders include the **PA Chiefs of Police Association, PA Office of the Victim Advocate, the PA Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**. 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 final 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 at Brandon@ceasefirepa.org or 717-623-2432.

Sincerely,

Adam Garber
CeaseFirePA Action Executive Director