June 1, 2022

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Commerce
Justice, and Science
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Commerce
Justice, and Science
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Matt Cartwright
Chairman, Subcommittee on Commerce
Justice, and Science
Capitol Building H-310
Washington, DC, 20515

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Commerce
Justice, and Science
Capitol Building H-310
Washington, DC, 20515

Dear Chairwoman Shaheen, Ranking Member Moran, Chairman Cartwright, and Ranking Member Aderholt,

On behalf of the undersigned national, state, and local organizations dedicated to protecting the health and safety of Americans across the nation, as you begin work on the Fiscal Year 2023 Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations Bill, we urge you to include funding under the Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) for states, tribes, and localities to improve implementation of existing State extreme risk protection order (ERPO) laws as a safety means to prevent suicides.¹

Nationally, suicide is the tenth leading cause of death for Americans and the second national leading cause of death for youth and veterans,² with 130 Americans dying by suicide each day.³ 51% of these suicides are completed by the means of firearms.⁴ However, these deaths can be prevented, as 3 in 4 individuals with suicidal ideations show a warning sign or tell someone.⁵ Recent studies of existing laws have shown that 70% of ERPOs are for suicidal ideations,⁶ and 1 in 10 orders prevents a suicide.⁷ In turn, proper implementation of ERPOs provides an opportunity for law enforcement to intervene to prevent tragedy.

Currently 20 states and the District of Columbia have enacted a version of an ERPO law,⁸ but a lack of resources and education hinders the proper implementation that can save lives of both the individuals subject to these orders and law enforcement. Implementation of best practices includes training for law enforcement, judges, and support staff on safe, effective, and efficient means to implement these orders; creating multidisciplinary teams to help intervene and enact the orders; and improving infrastructure to streamline filing and ERPO resolution. With a seed federal investment of $21 million dollars for a pilot grant to states and localities, law enforcement and court personnel can receive training and technical assistance, states can enact statewide coordination, and up to 45 jurisdictions across the nation can create

multidisciplinary teams, including professionals or specialists trained in crisis intervention, within their local law enforcement units to help Americans in crisis before tragedy strikes.

By empowering states, tribes, and localities to effectively implement existing laws, we can strengthen our state and locality-led suicide prevention efforts and better equip our judges and law enforcement with the tools to save lives. We urge you to include this request within the upcoming package.

Sincerely,

2020 Mom
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Work
American Association of Suicidology
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Medical Women’s Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association of Prosecuting Attorneys
Baltimore Crisis Response, Inc.
Battered Women’s Justice Project, National Research Center on Domestic Violence and Firearms
Carlsbad Battered Families Shelter
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Doctors for America
Eating Disorders Coalition
Esperanza United
Fort Lauderdale Police Department

Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance
Mental Health America
Mom Congress
National Association of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors (NAADAC), the Association for Addiction Professionals
National Alliance for Mental Illness
National Association for Behavioral Healthcare
National Association for Children’s Behavioral Health
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
National Federation of Families
National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform
National Organization for People of Color Against Suicide, Inc.
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
National Recourse Center on Domestic Violence and Firearms
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