

Brady
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Testimony of Ramya Swami, State Policy Manager, Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence
Support for HB 4945 & HB 4946 Before the House Criminal Justice Committee
September 26th, 2023

Dear Chair Hope, Vice-Chair Andrews and Distinguished Members of the House Criminal Justice Committee,

Founded in 1974, Brady works across Congress, courts, and communities, uniting gun owners and non-gun owners alike to end America's gun violence epidemic. Our organization today carries the name of Jim Brady, who was shot and severely injured in the assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan. Jim and his wife, Sarah, led the fight to pass federal legislation requiring background checks for gun sales. Brady continues to uphold Jim and Sarah's legacy by uniting Americans across the country in the fight to prevent gun violence. There are evidence-based policy solutions that we know will help to prevent gun violence in Michigan.

The epidemic of gun violence reaches communities in Michigan every day. The statistics speak for themselves: every 7 hours, someone in Michigan is killed by gun violence, with an average of 1,333 people dying yearly from gun violence.¹ Michigan elected officials must prioritize the safety and well-being of Michiganders by enacting and implementing proactive, research-informed policy solutions that prevent gun violence, save lives, and spare entire communities from loss, trauma and cycles of violence. One firearm death is one too many and Michigan can do more – like pass HB 4945 & HB 4946 – to save the lives of its citizens.

Support for HB 4945 & HB 4946: Protecting Victims and Survivors of Domestic Violence

Between 2015 and 2019, an average of 556 women across the country were killed by a husband or male dating partner with a gun each year.² Black women in the US are disproportionately the victims of fatal domestic violence with firearms: In 2019, Black women in the US accounted for 58% of women shot and killed by a husband or intimate acquaintance.³ Further, a male abuser's direct access to a gun dramatically increases — by more than 1,100% — the likelihood that intimate partner violence he commits will

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), *WISQARS injury data*, <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html>

² Violence Policy Center, *When Men Murder Women: An analysis of 2020 homicide data*, <https://vpc.org/when-men-murder-women-section-one/>

³ Violence Policy Center, *Female Homicide Victimization by Males*, <https://vpc.org/revealing-the-impacts-of-gun-violence/female-homicide-victimization-by-males/>

become fatal.⁴ An analysis of domestic violence reports in 2016 showed that about 4.5 million American women reported that an intimate partner had threatened them with a gun.⁵

The consequences of gaps in America's gun laws hit home for many women living in the United States: American women are 16 times more likely to be killed with a gun than their peers in other high-income countries,⁶ and many domestic violence victims and survivors deal with the terrifying reality that their abusers still have access to guns. In 2022, the federal Bipartisan Safer Communities Act closed the "boyfriend loophole" and added convicted domestic abusers in dating relationships to the federal NICS background check system. Earlier this year, Michigan lawmakers made strides towards creating a safer environment by requiring these background checks for all purchases and transfers of firearms. Despite these improvements, there is still more work to be done to prevent violent domestic abusers in possession of a gun from putting abuse victims at risk every single day.

What These Bills Do

HB 4945 & HB 4946 close the gap in state law and will provide a crucial tool for victims and survivors of domestic violence to be able to protect themselves. These bills prohibit individuals who have been convicted of domestic violence offenses from purchasing or possessing firearms within the State until 8 years after all fines are paid, terms of imprisonment for the offense are served and probation conditions are satisfied - an increase in protection from the 5 year prohibition in the federal law. These bills also prohibit the subject of a domestic violence restraining order from purchasing or possessing a firearm until the termination of the order. These bills will save lives.

Conclusion

Domestic violence is a tragic reality for far too many that is exponentially more lethal in the U.S. than in other industrialized countries because of unfettered access to firearms. The absence of state laws that are proven to protect against domestic violence-related homicides leaves victims and survivors of domestic violence in Michigan in extreme danger. Marginalized and vulnerable communities are disproportionately impacted and threatened because of systemic issues increasing their vulnerability to domestic violence. If passed, these bills would have a tangible impact in the lives of those at risk.

We respectfully urge your support of HB 4945 & HB 4946 so Michigan may prioritize the safety of those exposed to domestic violence.

Sincerely,
Ramya Swami

⁴ Spencer, C. M., & Stith, S. M. (2020). Risk Factors for Male Perpetration and Female Victimization of Intimate Partner Homicide: A Meta-Analysis. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 21(3), 527–540. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838018781101>

⁵ Sorenson SB, Schut RA. Nonfatal Gun Use in Intimate Partner Violence: A Systematic Review of the Literature. *Trauma Violence Abuse*. 2018 Oct;19(4):431-442. doi: 10.1177/1524838016668589. Epub 2016 Sep 14. Erratum in: *Trauma Violence Abuse*. 2023 Oct;24(4):2895. PMID: 27630138.

⁶ Erin Grinshteyn and David Hemenway, "Violent Death Rates: The US Compared with Other High-income OECD Countries, 2010," *American Journal of Medicine* 129, no. 3 (2016), accessed September 1, 2018, available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26551975>.