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Testimony Re: Senate Bill 2734, An Act Relating to Criminal Offenses – Weapons
Senate Judiciary Committee
March 31, 2022
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Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. We would also like to thank Senator Seveney for sponsoring this important bill and Senators Coyne, DiMario, Zurier, Miller, Goodwin, Pearson, Gallo, Euer, and DiPalma for co-sponsoring. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its support for Senate Bill 2734, which would make it a felony for the owner of any firearm to store or leave the firearm unlocked. Failure to store the firearm properly would subject the owner to a fine of not more than \$3000. Additionally, if the owner of a firearm leaves a firearm loaded in a place where they reasonably know a child under the age of 18 can likely gain access and it results in an injury, the owner would be subject to a penalty of up to five years imprisonment, and/or a fine of up to \$5,000.

Nationally and in Rhode Island, gun reform remains a key area of focus, especially in the wake of several tragic school and mass shootings over the past decade. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT believes comprehensive state policies to reduce gun violence are long overdue. **Senate Bill 2734 is a practical step to reduce gun injuries and increase the safety of children in Rhode Island.**

Gun-Related Emergency Department (ED) Visits, Hospitalizations, and Deaths Among Children and Youth, Rhode Island, 2015-2019

AGE	# OF ED VISITS	# OF HOSPITALIZATIONS	# OF DEATHS
1 to 14	48	4	0
15 to 17	50	10	4
18 to 19	47	17	3
TOTAL	145	31	7

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, 2015-2019.

In Rhode Island between 2015 and 2019, there were 145 emergency department visits, 31 hospitalizations, and 7 deaths of children and youth due to guns.

This law would encourage families to store guns safely, which would reduce the likelihood of a child being injured, hospitalized, or killed by a gun that he or she has found unlocked and unsecured. It would also reduce the likelihood that a child, teen, or adult could gain access to a gun and use it to take his or her own life, a risk that is particularly urgent with the increase in depression and suicidality we have seen in association with the COVID-19 pandemic.

We strongly urge you to pass Senate Bill 2734, which would require gun owners to store guns securely in locked containers equipped with tamper-resistant mechanical locks engaged to make the guns inoperable. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.