

Testimony as Submitted in support of SB23-169: Increasing Minimum Age to Purchase Firearms by Hunter Nelson, Policy Analyst at the Colorado Children’s Campaign

Senate State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee

March 8, 2023, Upon Adjournment

Old Supreme Court

Dear Mr. Chair and Members of the State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee,

My name is Hunter Nelson and I am a Policy Analyst at the Colorado Children’s Campaign. Together with our partner organizations and communities across the state, we advocate for the development and implementation of data-driven public policy that improves child and family well-being. We fight for a world in which, without exception, public policies and investments remove barriers for most impacted children and families and improve well-being for every child and every family. The Children’s Campaign is in strong support of SB23-169: Increasing Minimum Age to Purchase Firearms.

The Children’s Campaign believes that policy solutions addressing access to guns among Colorado youth are an essential part of a comprehensive approach to suicide and violence prevention.

We are deeply concerned about suicide rates among Colorado’s young people. The number of Colorado kids and teens who have died by suicide more than doubled between 2010 and 2022, and nearly one in five Colorado youth reported they had seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year as of 2019, according to the Children’s Campaign’s 2022 KIDS COUNT report. There are disproportionately higher rates among students who are American Indian or Alaskan Native, multiracial, female or transgender.¹ Firearms are involved in about half of suicides in our state, according to data from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.²

Impulse regulation and emotional control continue to develop into a person’s mid-20s, putting adolescents and young adults under the age of 21 at an elevated risk of attempting suicide.³ Having access to firearms increases the chances of a youth attempting or dying by suicide by firearm. Raising the minimum age for purchasing and possessing firearms to 21 has been shown to mitigate this issue. According to RAND’s Gun Policy in America initiative, there is evidence that minimum age requirements for purchasing and possessing firearms can reduce firearm suicides among young people.⁴ This promising evidence should not be ignored. Setting minimum age requirements for purchasing and possessing firearms also has the potential to reduce accidental deaths and homicides among children.⁵

Colorado has an obligation to protect its youth, and raising the minimum purchasing age of firearms to 21 years of age from 18 years of age has the potential to save young people’s lives. **Please vote yes on SB23-169.**

¹ Ibid.

² [Firearm Deaths Fact Sheet 2016-2021 FINAL.pdf \(colorado.gov\)](#)

³ [Minimum Age | Giffords](#)

⁴ [Effects of Minimum Age Requirements on Suicide | RAND](#)

⁵ [Farley_Gun Safety Brief_5.2.2019 REV.pdf \(cuanschutz.edu\)](#)

Thank you,

Hunter Nelson
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