

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, Members of the Joint Committee on Criminal Justice & Public Safety:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 759. I am Mark Segar, resident of Freeport. I am a retired teacher and school administrator. One who has had a former student, still a teenager, find an unsecured gun, and use it to die by suicide.

LD 759 addresses an important public health issue: keeping children safe. It is been an important issue for me for many years.

My father was a disabled WW II veteran. In his youth, he had loved to hunt small game in the fields and woods near his home in rural Virginia. He was badly wounded during the invasion of Lingayen Gulf in the Philippines in 1945, suffering paralytic injuries that included loss of use of his right hand.

He never told stories to us, his five sons, about the war, until we were adults. But he did talk about the dangers of guns that were mishandled, improperly stored, or fired by mistake.

There had been gun mishaps among his boyhood friends, gun accidents among his army buddies, incidents of domestic violence involving guns in families near his own.

Still he kept a pistol, and sometimes took me to the firing range to watch him practice, as he taught himself to write - and to shoot - again, with his left hand. It was a ritual that seemed to connect him to his innocent years before the war.

One day he took the three oldest of us out in his fishing skiff. Reaching the deepest part of the bay, he cut the engine and brought out his cherished Colt. “I can’t be sure that our house is safe with all you boys running around”, he said, as I recall. “I won’t risk it. Kids and guns don’t mix.” And gently, he let the gun slip from his hand and drop to rust away on the sea bed.

There was a big smile on his face as we headed back to shore. A smile of relief, as I came to learn. And a lesson I never forgot.

I know that not everyone can, or should, take the step my father did. But I also know that he was right about the dangers to kids. Last year alone, more than 370 children in this country came across an unsecured, loaded gun, and fired it.

143 deaths resulted, and 243 injuries.

Deaths and injuries that safe storage provisions - like those proposed in LD 759 - could help to prevent. I strongly urge you to support this bill, and to help see it enacted into law. To keep children safer, for all our sakes.

Thanks you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark W. Segar

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