



Texas Gun Sense Public Testimony
To the Select Committee on Mass Violence Prevention & Community Safety
Gyl Switzer, Executive Director

Public comment: *Duty (4): Evaluate the ongoing and long-term workforce needs of the state related to cybersecurity, mental health, law enforcement, and related professionals;*

Texas Gun Sense (TGS) is a nonpartisan nonprofit advocating for common-sense, evidence-based policies that reduce gun injuries and deaths.

TGS recommendations relevant to Duty #4 in regard to gun violence, including mass violence:

(1) As Designated Parties and many studies have outlined, Texas has a shortage of health care professionals, including mental health care professionals. We also know that much mental health care and interventions takes place in settings with practitioners that are not specifically designated as mental health settings such as in general practice offices.

In addressing gun violence, including mass violence, TGS recommends that health care providers are all trained to screen and refer for: suicidal ideation, safe storage of guns, and domestic violence. There are best practices for each of these.

(2) Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPO) are a tool that many states have successfully implemented to allow a civil court judge to temporarily separate a person in danger of suicide or homicide from their firearms until the crisis resolves. See TGS information on ERPOs on our website.

After Texas passes an ERPO, health care practitioners and law enforcement need training to understand the option and work with others to pursue an ERPO as a way to address potential gun violence.

TGS acknowledges the facts in the Designated Party statements particularly from NAMI Tx and the Hogg Foundation that indicate a diagnosis of a mental illness is not an indicator for violence.

Behaviors should be the basis of evaluating for an ERPO as outlined in TGS documents on the website.

(3) There is a huge need in the US and Texas for gun violence prevention. For more than 20 years at the national level, research on gun violence prevention has been effectively stymied. The Texas Legislature has not invested in gun violence prevention. For the issues in this Duty #4 and others, there should be a significant investment in research to determine the best way for relevant professions to address gun violence. Tailoring interventions is the best thing for preserving the rights of responsible persons who choose to own firearms.

Thanks to Chair Darby and the Members of the House Special Committee on Mass Violence Prevention & Community Safety. TGS knows that progress can be made to saving lives from gun violence in Texas and we look for your legislative leadership in this.