

1 **RESOLUTION 18-408**

2
3 **(Referred to Reference Committee D)**

4
5 **Subject:** PAMED Support for Legislation Establishing Extreme Risk Protection Orders as a Public
6 Health Measure

7 **Introduced by:** Kenneth M. Certa, MD

8 **Author:** Kenneth M. Certa, MD

9 **County/Specialty Affiliation of Author:**

10 **Endorsed by:** Pennsylvania Psychiatric Society

11
12 **WHEREAS,** suicide rates have increased by 30% over the past 15 years, and someone dies by suicide
13 every four hours in Pennsylvania; and

14
15 **WHEREAS,** more than half of the individuals who die by suicide use a firearm to end their lives; and

16
17 **WHEREAS,** thirteen states have enacted legislation establishing extreme risk protection orders to
18 temporarily remove firearms from individuals demonstrating a threat of harm to self or others; and

19
20 **WHEREAS,** a recent research study examined the effects of risk-based laws in Connecticut and
21 Indiana, demonstrating that those laws had a significant impact on suicide death rates; and

22
23 **WHEREAS,** very few households would be affected by such orders; the Connecticut and Indiana
24 study demonstrated that only 0.03% of firearm-owning households were affected; and

25
26 **WHEREAS,** currently, the major mechanism to limit access to firearms by those who pose a risk for
27 suicide is the Mental Health Procedures Act involuntary psychiatric commitment, which confers a
28 lifelong ban on firearms possession; and

29
30 **WHEREAS,** many families are reluctant to use involuntary psychiatric commitment due to stigma,
31 as well as the long-lasting effect of the removal of gun rights; and

32
33 **WHEREAS,** adding another less-stigmatizing mechanism to restrict access to firearms during a
34 period of crisis would save lives in our commonwealth; therefore, be it

35
36 **RESOLVED,** that the Pennsylvania Medical Society support efforts to establish Extreme Risk
37 Protection Orders in the commonwealth, so long as physicians are not included in those
38 empowered (or required) to petition for such orders.

39
40 **Fiscal Note:** \$_____

41
42 Relevance to the Strategic Plan

43
44 **145.000 Firearms: Safety and Regulation**

45
46 **145.995 Support Closing Pennsylvania's Private Sale Loophole for Long Guns by Requiring
47 Background Checks for All Firearms Transfers**

48 The Society shall reaffirm support for HB 1010 or similar legislation that closes Pennsylvania's private
49 sale loophole for long guns by requiring background checks for all firearms transfers. (Res. 409, H-
50 2016)

51

1 **145.996 Gun Violence**

2 The Society is directed to (1) issue a statement recognizing gun violence as a significant public health
3 problem, and urge politicians and the public to support further research into the epidemiology of risks
4 related to gun violence in the state of Pennsylvania; and (2) present, in writing, its position statement
5 recognizing gun violence as a significant public health concern and its support of research into the
6 epidemiology of risks related to gun violence in the state of Pennsylvania to the Pennsylvania
7 Department of Health, Violence, and Injury Prevention for consideration. The Pennsylvania
8 Delegation to the AMA is directed submit a resolution to the AMA House of Delegates, urging U.S.
9 legislators to support further research into the epidemiology of risks related to gun violence on a
10 national level. (Res. 206, H-2013)

11
12 **145.997 Promotion of Firearms Safety**

13 The Society shall partner with other stakeholders in an effort to promote firearms safety. (Res. 406,
14 H-2007)

15
16 **145.998 Firearms Safety Programs for Children**

17 The Society supports AMA Policy 145.990: Prevention of Firearm Accidents in Children which (1)
18 supports increasing efforts to reduce pediatric firearm morbidity and mortality by encouraging its
19 members to (a) inquire as to the presence of household firearms as a part of childproofing the home;
20 (b) educate patients to the dangers of firearms to children; (c) encourage patients to educate their
21 children and neighbors as to the dangers of firearms; and (d) routinely remind patients to obtain
22 firearms safety locks, to store firearms under lock and key, and to store ammunition separately from
23 firearms; and (2) encourages state medical societies to work with other organizations to increase public
24 education about firearm safety.

25 The Society also supports recently adopted AMA policy encouraging “organized medical staffs and
26 other physician organizations, including state and local medical societies, to recommend programs for
27 teaching firearm safety to children.” (Report 2, Board of Trustees, H-2000)

28
29 **145.999 Health Consequences of Firearms**

30 The Society advocates funding of scientific research on firearm related injury and death by appropriate
31 national groups, like the Centers for Disease Control. (Res. 50, H-1986; reaffirmed, H-2016)

32
33 **Additional documentation provided by the author (a resource document from the American
34 Psychiatric Association):**

35
36 **Extreme Risk Protection Orders**

37 Individuals that exhibit increased risk for suicide may be in greater danger if they have immediate
38 access to a firearm. Extreme risk protection orders (ERPOs) are a potential tool to mitigate the threat
39 to personal safety for those demonstrating suicidal ideation or behavior. The American Psychiatric
40 Association (APA) recently released a resource document about ERPOs.¹ The APA document noted
41 that:

- 42
43
- 44 • ERPOs can be beneficial as a form of **means restriction to prevent suicide**
 - 45 • ERPOs are **less stigmatizing and more effective** than laws that focus on diagnoses
 - 46 • ERPOs are a **good method of entry into the mental health treatment system** for
47 individuals who are not previously engaged or who have avoided treatment

¹ Kapoor R, Benedek E, Bonnie RJ, Gandhi T, Gold L, Judd S, Pinals DA: Resource document on risk-based gun removal laws. Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 2018

1 **A recent research study** published in *Psychiatric Services* examined the impact of similar laws
2 enacted in Connecticut and Indiana, which are the only two states that have had these laws in place
3 long enough for rigorous evaluation.² That study revealed the following:

- 4
- 5 • Enactment of Indiana's law resulted in a **7.5% reduction in firearm suicides**. It is estimated
6 that this **prevented 383 firearm suicides** over 10 years.
- 7 • Connecticut's law resulted in a **13.7% reduction in firearm suicides**. It is estimated that this
8 **prevented 128 suicides** over an 8-year period.
- 9 • **Suicidality was the factor 61%** of the time in Connecticut when the risk order was invoked.
- 10 • In Connecticut, **only .02% of gun-owning households** were affected. In Indiana, **only .04%**
11 **of gun-owning households** were affected.
- 12
- 13

408

² Kivisto AJ, Phalen PL: Effects of risk-based firearm seizure laws in Connecticut and Indiana on suicide rates, 1981–2015. *Psychiatric Services* 69: 855-862, 2018.