

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Anne Leader, and I live in Auburn. I am a volunteer with the Alabama Chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America (part of Everytown for Gun Safety), a grassroots movement of concerned citizens fighting for public safety measures that respect the Second Amendment while also protecting us from gun violence.

We are not “anti-gun.” Our work to end gun violence comes from our commitment to making Alabama’s communities safer.

The primary proposal being considered by the Commission would repeal a requirement that has been on the books since 1936² – that persons must get a permit to carry a concealed weapon in public. We urge this Commission to recommend that we not dismantle our existing gun laws and instead enact common-sense legislation that research shows will help reduce gun violence.

It is unclear why we would want to eliminate a requirement that law enforcement continuously tells us works to keep the citizens of Alabama safe. Evidence from other permitless-carry states should give us pause.

Since legalizing permitless carry in Arizona, aggravated assaults with a firearm have increased by 44%, even though the downward trend in gun homicide that began *prior* to enacting the law continues.³

Homicides are not the only indicator of gun violence. For example, Alaska and Wyoming, frequently held up as places where permitless carry has been successful, ranked first and third respectively for firearm death per capita in 2015.⁴

Missouri, which became a permitless carry state in 2017, has also seen an almost immediate uptick in certain gun crimes, including a 15% increase in aggravated assaults and a 69% increase in overall homicides in St. Louis County.⁵

Additionally, since Alabama doesn’t require background checks on all gun sales, people can buy a gun from unlicensed sellers without any background check whatsoever. If our permit system is repealed, a person could buy a gun and immediately carry it concealed in public – no background check required.

¹ Visit us at <https://www.facebook.com/MomsDemandActionAL/>. For more on Everytown for Gun Safety visit <https://everytown.org>.

² 1936 Ala. Laws 51, An Act to Regulate the Sale, Transfer, and Possession of Certain Kinds of Firearms. Reaffirmed in Sec. 13A-11-73 of Alabama Criminal Code. <https://www.ago.state.al.us/Documents/firearms/File-Alabama-Weapon-Laws.pdf>

³ Data from 2010-2016. Arizona Department of Public Safety. Report: Crime in Arizona 2010: An annual report compiled by Access Integrity Unit of the Arizona Department of Public Safety. p. 24. Retrieved from:

<https://www.azdps.gov/about/reports/crime>. Arizona Department of Public Safety. Report: Crime in Arizona 2016: p. 33. Retrieved from: <https://www.azdps.gov/about/reports/crime>.

⁴ AK had 24.0 (age-adjusted rate 23.4) firearm deaths per 100,000 residents; WY, 19.3 (age-adjusted rate 19.6). Because death rates are affected by the population composition of each area, the CDC recommends using age-adjusted death rates to compare between areas. Using age-adjusted death rates, the other permitless-carry states rank as follows: MS, tied for 3rd with AL and WY (19.6 deaths per 100,000 residents); MO, 8th (18.1); WV, 18th (14); ID, 16th (14.7); AZ, 19th (13.8); ND 20th (12.8); KS, 31st (11.4); VT, 39th (9.6); ME, 37th (9.8), and NH, 41st (8.9). See Table I-30 at https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr66/nvsr66_06_tables.pdf.

⁵ Missouri State Highway Patrol. UCR Page. Retrieved from: www.mshp.dps.missouri.gov/MSHPWeb/SAC/data_and_statistics_ucr.html.

Some say, well, Alabamians can already do that with openly carried firearms. This is true. But just because the law allows for open carry without a permit, doesn't mean we should roll back the law further – especially against the advice of Alabama's law enforcement experts.

Furthermore, Alabamians overwhelmingly support the permit requirement. In a recent poll conducted by Survey USA on behalf of Everytown for Gun Safety, 89% of Alabama voters, including 94% of Republicans, 89% of gun owners, and 96% of permit holders, supported requiring a permit to carry a concealed handgun in public in Alabama.⁶

Instead of rolling back laws we know keep us safer, we should be looking for ways to keep guns out of the hands of people with dangerous histories, like requiring background checks on all gun sales, also supported by 89% of Alabama voters.⁷

In 2015, the last year for which nationwide data is available, Alabama had the 3rd highest rate of firearm deaths per capita.⁸ But, in states that require background checks for all gun sales,⁹ there are 47% fewer women shot to death by intimate partners, 47% fewer gun suicides, 48% less illegal gun trafficking, and 53% fewer law enforcement officers shot and killed in the line of duty.¹⁰

We also know that 54% of mass shooters have a history of domestic or family violence.¹¹ We should work to expand Alabama's law barring domestic abusers from buying or owning guns to cover abusive dating partners. In 2016, 42% of Alabama's domestic violence victims were girlfriends or ex-girlfriends.¹² We should also require domestic abusers to turn in the guns they already have when they become legally prohibited from having them. This policy has been implemented successfully in many states, and the data shows that cities in these states see a 25% reduction in intimate partner gun homicides.¹³

These are just some of the proactive solutions we could adopt to end gun violence in Alabama.¹⁴ We should heed the lessons and research from other states and work to reduce gun deaths in our state. Thank you for your time.

⁶ The independent, apolitical, and non-partisan research firm SurveyUSA interviewed 1,100 state of Alabama adults 04/26/17 through 04/30/17. Of the adults, 965 are registered to vote. Of the registered voters, 852 report having voted in the 11/08/16 general election. <https://www.surveyyusa.net/fast-facts/>

⁷ We could strengthen our concealed-carry permitting system by requiring things like live-fire training for all applicants. In the survey cited in note 6, voters were asked whether they strongly support (62%), support (27%), oppose (5%), or strongly oppose (4%) requiring all gun buyers to pass a criminal background check, no matter where or from whom they buy a gun. Two percent were unsure.

⁸ In 2015, Alabama had 19.7 firearm deaths per 100,000 residents (age-adjusted rate 19.6), ranking behind only Alaska and Louisiana, and tied with Mississippi and Wyoming. Rounding out the top 10 were MT (19.2), NM (18.6), MO (18.1), OK (18), and SC (17.3). The ten safest states were: MA (3), HI (3.6), NY (4.2), RI (4.7), CT (5.3), NJ (5.4), MN (7.4), CA (7.7), IA (7.8), and NE (8.9). See table I-30 https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr66/nvsr66_06_tables.pdf.

⁹ States that require background checks on all sales, with rank of fewest gun deaths in parentheses: CA (8), CO (29), CT (5), DE (27), HI (2), IA (9), IL (12), MD (24), MA (1), MI (22), NE (10), NV (37), NJ (6), NY (3), NC (28), OR (19), PA (19), RI (4), and WA (14). See table I-30, https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr66/nvsr66_06_tables.pdf.

¹⁰ Conversely, in Missouri, which repealed its requirement in 2007, crime guns bought in state have gun up 28% and guns recovered at crime scenes within two years of retail sale have gone up 96.9%. The gun homicide rate has gone up 25%. <https://everytownresearch.org/evidence-from-missouri-that-background-checks-work/>. See also Everytown for Gun Safety, Background Check Reduce Gun Violence and Saves Lives, January 2017. <http://etresearch.wpengine.com/backgroundchecks-reduce-gun-violence-and-save-lives/>

¹¹ Everytown for Gun Safety. (2017). Mass Shootings in the United States: 2009-2016, available at <https://everytownresearch.org/reports/mass-shootings-analysis/>

¹² Alabama Law Enforcement Agency, Statistical Analysis Center. 2016 Domestic Violence in Alabama. <http://www.alea.gov/Documents/Documents/DomesticViolence2016.pdf>

¹³ Zeoli, A. M., & Webster, D. W. (2010). Effects of domestic violence policies, alcohol taxes and police staffing levels on intimate partner homicide in large US cities. *Injury prevention*, 16(2), 90-95.

¹⁴ There are other things we could do – we could allow cities to regulate firearms in order to help create local solutions to gun violence, we could repeal Alabama's Stand Your Ground law, a type of law that has been associated with an increase in homicides.