



September 15, 2025

TO: Members of the Working Group on Gun Violence Prevention

FROM: Aurora Vasquez, Senior Vice President, Sandy Hook Promise

Subject: Sandy Hook Promise's Policy Initiatives for Minnesota

Dear Members of the Working Group on Gun Violence Prevention,

Thank you for taking the time to come together to look for solutions to gun violence. Sandy Hook Promise envisions a future where all children are free from school shootings and other acts of violence. As a national nonprofit organization, SHP's mission is to educate and empower youth and adults to prevent violence in schools, homes, and communities. Creators of the life-saving, evidence-informed "Know the Signs" prevention programs, SHP teaches the warning signs of someone who may be in crisis, socially isolated, or at-risk of hurting themselves or others and how to get help. SHP also advances school safety, youth mental health, and responsible gun ownership at the state and federal levels through nonpartisan policy and partnerships. SHP is led by several family members whose loved ones were killed in the tragic mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012.

The policy initiative that Sandy Hook Promise is proposing has two components. These components are:

Component One: Supporting Minnesota's Extreme Risk Protection Order Law

Adopted in 2023, Minnesota has a vital helping tool in its Extreme Risk Protection Order law (MN Statutes [624.7171](#) to 624.7178). As is often the case with new laws, this helping tool merits additional, intentional, exposure. That is, maximizing the likelihood that those who need to use it, know what the law does, how to use it, and when is essential. To strengthen the reach of any

efforts previously undertaken, SHP proposes Minnesota create a robust long-term public education campaign across multiple media forms.

Additionally, law enforcement leaders merit dedicated funding they can use to augment the sector's understanding and use of this law. This is a critical consideration given that when an ERPO is most needed, time is of the essence. To this end, SHP proposes a mandatory training course for key members of law enforcement. This type of investment will help ensure the existing law is applied consistently and timely to reduce future, imminent risk of gun violence.

Component Two: Strengthening investment in Minnesota's School Safety Center

Housed within Minnesota's Department of Public Safety, the Minnesota School Safety Center can be an even greater resource for Minnesota's schools. In this regard, the SHP policy vision has three primary parts, designed to strengthen the center's role as the go-to school safety resource:

- Require Minnesota schools to adopt *evidence-based* school safety plans and invest in the school safety center so that it can readily help schools develop, improve, or implement them.
- Formalizing a Youth Advisory Council (e.g. students, youth survivors of school or community violence, parents, academic experts, and mental health professionals) to be housed within the school safety center, to provide input on matters of school safety, including the content and focus of school safety plans. And;
- Position the school safety center to hire (and retain) staff with expertise as school mental health professionals, such as school psychologist, school social worker, or school counselor to help schools design *evidence-based* school safety plans.

In summary, this policy vision balances two critical needs: 1) the critical need to strengthen efforts to intervene when a gun owner is on the brink of misusing their firearms; and 2) the critical need to ensure schools can readily adopt safety plans grounded in *proven* approaches and not merely those they hear about most often. Equally important, a one-time investment can significantly move the needle on these critical needs.

Sandy Hook Promise looks forward to continuing the discussion on how best to ensure the safety of Minnesota's students and residents. We stand at the ready to offer our experience and insight to the working group. If you have questions, please reach out to Aurora Vasquez at aurora.vasquez@sandyhookpromise.org.