



St. Mary's, Hamilton Village

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH AT PENN

3916 Locust Walk, Philadelphia, PA 19104 | www.stmarysatpenn.org

Councilmember Jamie Gauthier
City Hall, Room 582
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Dear Councilmember Jamie Gauthier:

I am writing to urge you to vote for the Extreme Risk Protection Order or “red flag” laws (Pennsylvania House Bill 1903 and Senate Bill 134). I live in your district in Philadelphia.

I am a Christian and a member of the Schuylkill Deanery of the Diocese of Pennsylvania, a group of Episcopal churches in West Philadelphia. This issue is a matter of faith for me as a follower of Jesus, who asked me to love and protect my neighbor.

This proposed PA legislation would create a process for police or family members to petition the courts for a civil (non-criminal) order to temporarily suspend a person’s access to firearms including removing any existing firearms for up to one year. The judge would deem these people a danger to themselves or others. If the evidence convinces the court there is a serious risk, the order is approved. This process would allow preventive action to take place while preserving due process and not trampling on people’s constitutional rights. The order could be extended only with another court hearing.

While red flag laws would have removed guns from the hands of some of our youngest mass shooters, in states that currently have red flag laws guns are most often removed from people who show evidence of being threats to themselves or to their families, or who were suffering from judgment-impairing illnesses like dementia or alcoholism.

People who commit suicide usually give some warning or red flags to friends or loved ones before they act. These laws would allow family and friends to intervene to prevent such a tragedy. According to a recent N Y Times article, “Several studies suggest that the laws have a substantial effect on suicides, the most common way that guns kill Americans. Research in Connecticut and Indiana found that for every 10 to 20 confiscations under the laws, there was one fewer death than would otherwise have been expected. The researchers then tracked the people who were subject to the confiscation orders and found that they were more than 30 times as likely as the average person to commit suicide. “It shows the law is being applied not willy-nilly, but to a group that is really at a high risk of dying,” said Jeffrey Swanson, a professor of psychiatry at Duke University, who worked on the research.”

Right now, 17 states have red flag laws protecting their citizens. The bipartisan bill proposed by the US House and Senate encourages states to pass red flag laws by offering grants to create the program and to offer increased mental health services. If this indeed passes, now is the right time to get these laws out of committee and see them enacted into legislation.

Please, on behalf of the vulnerable among us most at risk for self-harm, work with your colleagues in our state legislature to advance this important legislation.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Print Name _____

Signature _____

Email _____

Address _____
