

Testimony of Peter Fogg Representing Colorado Faith Communities United Against Gun Violence (CFCU) Before the House Judiciary Committee on HB20-1278: Concerning Procedures for a Domestic Abuser Upon the Issuance of a Protection Order

February 25, 2020

CFCU Position: Strongly Support

CFCU is an organization of over forty Christian, Jewish, Unitarian Universalist and other faith-based communities, growing in numbers as we meet here today, dedicated to the common edicts found in our respective scriptures, texts and creeds to oppose the tide of gun violence and to act on ways to prevent injury or death by the improper use of firearms. It is in this context that we strongly support HB20-1278.

We believe the bill does much to remedy the flaws, constitutional questions, and inconsistent enforcement of the provisions of the Domestic Violence bill enacted in 2013 by requiring more specific procedures and criteria for the relinquishment, affirmation of relinquishment, and storage of firearms in the possession of those persons subject to a civil protection order regarding domestic violence issued by a court.

There are reams of documented evidence across the country that access to a firearm in the midst of a domestic dispute can and does result in death and injury. In an atmosphere of emotional turbulence and anger, the impulse to grab a firearm and use it to resolve the dispute can be intense and immediate and fatal. According to the Colorado Attorney General's 2019 Annual Report on Domestic Violence Fatalities, 63% of those homicides were committed with a firearm, while a number of other victims in these incidents were wounded. This can be attributed in part to the fact that on average across Colorado, only 36% of civil protection orders issued by the judicial system under the 2013 statute required the relinquishment of guns.

Clearly, no bill or law is perfect. There will be blemishes and critics in most cases, and legislative history shows that those dealing in some fashion with firearms are hardly exempt in this regard. Arguments about whether rights and privileges are being infringed upon seem endless. But just as allowing someone convicted of a DUI to maintain their license and continue driving without undergoing any requirements or consequences for dealing with their behavior has been declared unacceptable and a danger to the public at large, so does leaving a firearm in the possession of a person found guilty of committing an act or acts of domestic violence. We urge the members of this committee and others both within and outside these walls to prioritize the sanctity of life in making decisions on behalf and in the name of securing the public's health and safety. We urge the approval of HB20-1278.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter L. Fogg, Steering Committee

On behalf of Colorado Faith Communities United Against Gun Violence

