

SUBJECT: Developing a suicide prevention brochure for handgun applicants

COMMITTEE: Homeland Security and Public Safety — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 9 ayes — White, Bowers, Goodwin, Harless, Hefner, E. Morales, Patterson, Schaefer, Tinderholt

0 nays

WITNESSES: For — Gary Zimmerman; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Susana Carranza, League of Women Voters of Texas; Robin Breed, Rebecca Defelice, Nancy Einhorn, Mandy Gauld, Melanie Greene, and Leslie Blanton, Moms Demand Action; Matthew Lovitt, National Alliance on Mental Illness Texas; Alison Mohr Boleware, National Association of Social Workers-Texas Chapter; Jennifer Mudge, Texas Council on Family Violence; Christina Puentes, Frances Schenkkan, Gyl Switzer, and Louis Wichers, Texas Gun Sense; Jennifer Allmon, The Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops; and seven individuals)

Against — Tara Mica, National Rifle Association; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Felisha Bull and Rachel Malone, Gun Owners of America; Mark Borskey, Texas State Rifle Association; Marcia Strickler, Wilco We Thee People; and 11 individuals)

BACKGROUND: Government Code ch. 41 governs license renewal procedures for handguns.

Concerned parties note that most firearm deaths in the United States are due to suicide, and more than 2,000 Texans committed suicide using firearms in 2019 alone. It has been suggested that development of a suicide prevention brochure for handgun license applicants could raise awareness about this issue.

DIGEST: CSHB 4259 would require the Department of Public Safety to post on its website a printable brochure, developed in cooperation with the Health

and Human Services Commission, that included suicide prevention information regarding:

- the warning signs that a person was at risk of suicide;
- suicide prevention;
- state agencies that provided mental health and suicide prevention services; and
- the phone number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

The department would be required to update the brochure by October 1 of each year, and provide it by mail or email to each new applicant for a license to carry a handgun.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2021.