



June 4, 2019

Re: Amnesty International USA Urges the Senate to pass Ethan's Law (S. 193)

Dear Senator:

On behalf of Amnesty International USA ("AIUSA") and our more than one million members nationwide, I am writing to urge you to pass "Ethan's Law" (S. 193) introduced in the Senate by Senators Blumenthal and Murphy.

Gun violence is a human rights [issue](#) and under international law the U.S. is obligated to undertake due diligence to protect the rights to life and to security of person and to prevent firearm violence by private actors and in the community by regulating the possession of firearms and ammunition in order to prevent firearms from being misused. This includes ensuring that firearms are safely stored.

Policies calling for the safe storage of firearms can save lives and prevent foreseeable firearm-related injury and death. Too many children and youth- like Ethan Song- die from the unintentional discharge of an unsecured firearm in the home. In fact, research indicates that 4.6 million children in the U.S. live in homes with at least one loaded, unlocked firearm.¹ Another study evaluating firearm storage patterns in the U.S. found that "[o]f the homes with children and firearms, 55% were reported to have one or more firearms in an unlocked place," and 43% reported keeping guns without a trigger lock in an unlocked place.² According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2017, at least four children and teens were unintentionally killed or injured every day with firearms.³ These deaths are preventable. In addition to preventing unintentional firearm injury and death, safe storage laws can also assist in reducing access to firearms for individuals in crisis. An

¹ Deborah Azrael, Joanna Cohen, Carmel Salhi, and Matthew Miller, *Firearm Storage in Gun-owning Households with Children: Results of a 2015 National Survey*. *Journal of Urban Health* (2018): 1-10.

² Mark A. Schuster et al., *Firearm Storage Patterns in U.S. Homes with Children*, *90 Am. J. Pub. Health* (Apr. 2000): 588, 590, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/reprints/2005/RAND_RP890.pdf.

³ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, WISQARS, Fatal Injury Data and Non-Fatal Injury Data (2017), <https://webappa.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/nfirates.html>.

analysis of states with some form of safe storage laws have 40% fewer suicides and 68% fewer firearm suicides than states without these safeguards in place. ⁴

S. 193 bills will encourage states to pass Child Access Prevention (CAP) laws requiring gun owners to secure firearms in their homes. It will enforce accountability on firearms owners who fail to safely store or safely secure their firearms to prevent access to minors or others who are dangerous to themselves or others. The bill includes a \$500 fine, possible forfeiture of the weapon, and, if the unsecured gun causes the death of another person, the gun owner could face a five-year prison sentence.

Currently, 46 states and the District of Columbia do not have laws requiring firearms to be stored in a locked place to prevent their theft. By passing Ethan's law, Congress can lead the country in preventing gun violence by responsibly ensuring that the safe storage of firearms is the law of the land.

If passed, S.193, would be a critical step in addressing the need for safeguards to protect against unintentional and intentional misuse of firearms, thereby enhancing the protection of basic human rights jeopardized by gun violence: the right to life and the right to security of person.

Killing more than 39,000 men, women and children across the U.S. every year, gun violence is a human rights crisis that demands immediate attention. Every person has the right to live, to safety and security, and the right to be free from discrimination. These human rights must not be compromised. Public safety is not a partisan issue; it is a human rights issue.

Amnesty International USA urges the Senate to pass S.193.

Sincerely



Adotei Akwei
Deputy Director, Advocacy and Government Relations
Amnesty International USA
600 Pennsylvania Avenue SE, Ste 500
Washington DC 20009

⁴ Michael D. Anestis and Joye C. Anestis, *Suicide Rates and State Laws Regulating Access and Exposure to Handguns*, *American Journal of Public Health* 105, no. 10 (2015): 2049–2058; <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4566524/>.

