

National Association of Social Workers

March 29, 2013

State Senator John Lehman
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Dear Senator Lehman:

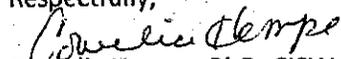
Thank you for soliciting our input on your proposed legislation, LRB 1530, concerning the protection of Wisconsin citizens from gun violence. It is certainly a timely issue, given Oak Creek and Sandy Hook, in addition to many other tragedies across our nation. The National Association of Social Workers, at the national and Wisconsin Chapter levels have long been advocates of gun control; therefore, we applaud your efforts to limit the carrying of concealed weapons. In addition, Licensed Clinical Social Workers represent the largest profession providing psychotherapy in the state and we appreciate your sensitivity to unnecessary stigmatization of those with mental illness.

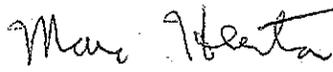
Currently, all Wisconsin licensed mental health professionals must report to local police and sheriff departments, under the "duty to warn" statute. Expecting, or giving the option to, clinical social workers and other mental health professionals to make an additional report that is already covered by the current state law, which mandates reports when there is perceived danger to the patient or others, would be redundant. We would prefer to have local law enforcement forward the reports they already receive to the Department of Justice, who can then act accordingly regarding gun permits. This preferred method of reporting would also minimize the potential of duplicative reporting and/or an incident not being reported due to confusion as to whether the report was made.

With this requirement, every dangerous individual reported by a licensed mental health professional would be referred to the Department of Justice and presumably denied a gun permit or required to relinquish the gun permit. This could lead to much improved safety in our communities. And, at the same time, the therapeutic relationship of trust between the consumer and provider would be respected, by not adding a duplicative reporting protocol.

Again, NASW WI and its licensed clinical social workers around the state thank you both for this opportunity to review your proposed legislation and submit this response. Please know that we appreciate your efforts to deal with this national crisis.

Respectfully,


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NASW WI President


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