

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Media Contact:**

Patricia Brigham

[preventgunviolencefl@gmail.com](mailto:preventgunviolencefl@gmail.com)

## **Florida Gun Activists Unite in Opposition to Permitless Carry Legislation and Other Deadly Gun Bills**

*In an average year, more than 2,500 people die and over 5,000 are wounded by guns in Florida*

**ST. PETERSBURG, FL.** – Today, Prevent Gun Violence Florida and the League of Women Voters of the St. Petersburg Area co-hosted a press conference and protest in opposition to gun legislation moving through the Florida legislature. Legislative bills that will impact gun safety in a negative way and put people's lives at risk are [SB 150](#), [HB 543](#), and [HB 1543](#).

Not only is weakening gun laws dangerous to the safety of human lives, but it also costs Floridians and the state billions a year. Florida has the [25th-highest](#) societal cost of gun violence in the United States at \$1,878 per resident each year. In fact, gun deaths and injuries cost Florida \$40.3 billion each year, of which \$875.9 million is paid by taxpayers.

SB 150 and its house companion HB 543 provide that a person who is authorized to carry a concealed weapon or concealed firearm without a license is required to carry valid identification and display it upon demand by a police officer. A violation of these provisions is a noncriminal violation, punishable by a \$25 fine. HB 1543 would lower the minimum age from 21 to 18 to buy rifles and other long guns in Florida. The legislature is playing dangerous games with the lives of Floridians by pushing these bills forward.

"The U.S. has already seen 100-plus mass shootings this year--and it's only March- yet our Florida Republican legislators think it's a good time to make access to guns easier? Obviously, they care more about the firearm industry than they do the lives of Floridians and the millions who visit our state," said Patricia Brigham, President of Prevent Gun Violence Florida, Inc.

"Guns are now the leading cause of death for children in this country. An average of 206 children are shot and killed annually in Florida. This deadly legislation lowers the penalty for carrying a gun on school campuses from a felony to a misdemeanor. More children will die as a result of permitless carry. Republican legislators need to stop playing games with the lives of our kids," Gail Schwartz, Chairwoman of Ban Assault Weapons Now and Aunt of Parkland shooting victim, Alex Schachter.

"In terms of state firearm death rates, Florida ranks in the middle of the pack with nearly 14 people killed for every 100,000 residents. Compare that to a state like New York, which has a similar number of residents but only 5.44 people killed. Why is this true? Part of the reason is Florida's lax gun laws and the course charted by Governor DeSantis and Republican leadership in the Legislature that will arm more people with proposals like permitless carry and lowering the age for long gun possession to 18," said Andy Pelosi, Campaign to Keep Guns Off Campus Executive Director.

"From 2018 to 2021, our community has experienced 281 incidents of gun violence resulting in 135 deaths. Permitless carry will do nothing to decrease the violence and trauma in our community; it will

likely exacerbate it. We need community-based, trauma-informed solutions, not dangerous, unnecessary policies," said Linsey Grove, Social Justice Team Co-Chair, of the League of Women Voters of St. Pete.

"The legacy of our beautiful son Joaquin will continue to march, disrupt, and demand change until America's gun industry becomes irrelevant to our citizens," said Manny Oliver, Co-founder of Change The Ref.

"Shootings are a public health issue that never should have been politicized or monetized. Our governor and Legislature are doing both and it's time to get loud so our citizens and visitors know they are turning Florida into a modern-day Wild West by dropping permits and allowing untrained people to carry guns when they leave their homes," Carol Rescigno, President of Brady United Against Gun Violence.

"Having taught traditionally-aged college students for the past 30 years, I have observed what other researchers have documented, which is that college students today are far more depressed and anxious than they have ever been. They also live in a highly-stressed, academic environment where many "relax" by drinking...a lot. Add a firearm to that mix, and a non-lethal attempt at suicide becomes lethal," said Dr. Marjorie Sanfilippo, Associate Dean of Faculty & Executive Director of the Center for Academic Excellence. "Any legislation that puts firearms into the hands of teenagers should be opposed on every level."

"Anti-LGBTQ hate coupled with easy access to weapons has deadly consequences, as LGBTQ Floridians know all too well. Permitless, untrained carry will cost lives, but Republicans have insisted on fast-tracking this proposal to improve Ron DeSantis' political prospects. We are proud to join Prevent Gun Violence Florida, and the majority of Floridians who oppose it, in urging lawmakers to reject this extreme proposal," said Yordanos Molla, Equality Florida Deputy Field Director.

It is imperative that all Floridians reach out to their legislators in opposition to [SB 150](#), [HB 543](#), and [HB 1543](#).

To learn more about gun violence and get involved visit, <https://www.preventgunviolenceflorida.org/>.

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#### **About Prevent Gun Violence Florida**

Prevent Gun Violence Florida is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advocating for meaningful gun law reform for a safer Florida.

For more information visit,

<https://www.preventgunviolenceflorida.org/>



#### **About Ban Assault Weapons NOW (BAWN)**

BAWN is a grassroots gun safety reform group formed by survivors and loved ones of the Pulse and Parkland massacres. BAWN is dedicated to electing Florida candidates who share our

commitment to banning assault weapons and saving lives from senseless gun violence. For more information visit, <https://www.bawnfl.org/index.html>



#### **About The Campaign to Keep Guns Off Campus**

The organization works with K-12 schools, colleges, and universities across the country to oppose legislative policies that would force loaded, concealed guns on campuses. Since 2008, The Campaign to Keep Guns Off Campus is the only national organization of its kind tasked with protecting higher educational institutions and the communities they serve. For more information visit, <https://www.keepgunsoffcampus.org/>



#### **About Brady United Against Gun Violence**

Brady has worked for decades in courtrooms, Congress, and communities to create a safer America. Grassroots volunteers in Sarasota are in their ninth year of raising awareness about this important issue. Some of their goals as the oldest continuous Brady chapter in Florida are to work in the state and nationally to secure Brady background checks for all gun purchases, to push nationally for ERPOs (Extreme Risk Protection Orders, sometimes known as red flag laws), to get assault weapons and high-capacity magazines banned and to encourage people to lock up their guns. For more information visit, <https://www.bradyunited.org/>



#### **About The League of Women Voters of the St. Petersburg Area (LWVSPA)**

LWVSPA is a nonpartisan political organization dedicated to empowering voters and defending democracy. The LWVSPA was a founding chapter of the League of Women Voters of Florida state chapter. Since 1939 our League has had a rich history in St. Petersburg, successfully advocating for universal curbside recycling, declaring racism a public health crisis, and affirming reproductive rights for our residents amongst many other accomplishments. For more information visit, <https://lwvspa.org/>



#### **About Change the Ref (CTR)**

CTR was formed to empower our Future Leaders. CTR gives the kids of today the tools they need to be empowered to make changes to critical issues that affect our nation, through education, conversation, and activism. It uses urban art and nonviolent creative confrontation to expose the disastrous effects of the mass shooting pandemic. It also brings focus to the NRA's corrupt maneuvers to buy lawmakers, while forcing solutions that are essential to healing mass shooting victims' families' lifelong grief. Change The Ref's ultimate goal is to give the young

generation of survivors and victims a disrupting voice to help lead the way to change – a more peaceful future. For more information visit, <https://changetheref.org/about-us/>



### **About Equality Florida**

Equality Florida is the largest civil rights organization dedicated to securing full equality for Florida's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community. Equality Florida was formed in 1997 as Governor Jeb Bush took office and Florida's state government made a hard turn to the right. Our strong presence in the Capitol since our founding over 25 years ago has allowed us to defeat or neutralize dozens of anti-LGBTQ bills since 1997. These bills included efforts to overturn all local anti-discrimination policies, repeal all safe school policies, expand Florida's anti-gay adoption ban, and prohibit domestic partnership benefits and protections. Through lobbying, grassroots organizing, education, and coalition building, we are changing Florida so that no one suffers harassment or discrimination

on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity, or expression. For more information visit, <https://eqfl.org/>.