



## NAMI News

# NAMI Provides Testimony To U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee On Extreme Risk Protection Orders

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Today, NAMI testified in front of the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee regarding Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs). ERPOs provide legal mechanisms for the removal of firearms from people who are potentially at risk of harming themselves or others. ERPOs, when appropriately implemented, can be lifesaving.

In his testimony, Ron Honberg, NAMI's senior policy advisor, emphasized that criteria for ERPOs should be based on specific, real-time behaviors and evidence-based risk factors for violence rather than targeting or singling out people with mental illness.

"An individual's history of mental illness or specific diagnosis is not a good predictor for violence," testified Honberg. While some symptoms of severe mental illness, such as delusions and paranoia, are a risk factor, overall, only 4% of violent acts in the U.S. are attributable to mental illness. "It is therefore neither necessary or appropriate to specifically identify mental illness as a risk factor in state or federal laws."

In fact, people with mental illness are more often victims of violence than perpetrators. Significantly, the greatest threat of gun violence is actually suicide—which accounts for 60% of gun deaths in the U.S. each year.

To maximize the positive impact of ERPOs and to prevent unintended consequences, NAMI offered six recommendations:

1. Determinations of risk should be based on an individualized assessment and grounded in evidence.
2. Any person subject to an ERPO petition should be afforded due process protections.
3. Law enforcement officers responsible for removing firearms from individuals under an ERPO should receive training on crisis de-escalation and crisis intervention.
4. Stigmatizing language should not be used in writing or describing these laws.
5. Health professionals should also have the ability to initiate petitions for ERPOs.
6. Key stakeholders, including law enforcement, families, health professionals and others, should be educated about these laws and how to utilize them.

NAMI's full testimony can be found [here](#).

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