



Public Comment to Crime Commission – August 20, 2019

Presented by Jeff Caruso, Executive Director

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

As we all know, many factors contribute to the violence in our society, which will not be solved by a single piece of legislation. And we recognize that firearms often serve the legitimate purpose of self-defense and the defense of loved ones.

We are convinced too that respect and reverence for all human life should lead all of us to explore the very best solutions for stopping this violence as much as we can, and we are very grateful to see the work you are doing toward that hoped for outcome.

We wish to emphasize two proposals in particular, both of which have been highlighted for their effectiveness.

The first is universal background checks. The Virginia Catholic Conference has consistently supported background checks legislation each year from the 2010 General Assembly session onward, and we continue to do so. As I noted in my testimony one of those years, if a stronger background checks law could save even a single life, that is what we should do. Based on one of the presentations yesterday, having this law would likely have a far greater effect.

The second is extreme risk protection order legislation. We supported this legislation during the 2018 and 2019 sessions, so that people who pose a substantial risk of injury to self or others are prohibited from purchasing, possessing or transporting a firearm. Again, one of the presentations yesterday showed having this type of law would likely have an effect on reducing violence.

In addition, we support the legislation that would invest more resources in early intervention for those who may be at risk of committing a violent act, as well as in ways to report potential threats.

United with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, we also think proposals like the Federal Assault Weapons Ban merit renewed consideration, as do reasonable limits on access to high-capacity weapons and ammunition magazines and a ban on bump stocks.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak and for your consideration of these thoughts.