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My name is Andrew Zweifler. I'm a physician. The popular image of members of my profession is that of the curers of illness, dispensing powerful medications or performing lifesaving operations. But as knowledge of the causes of disease and disability has grown, doctors now are able to focus on prevention.

I serve on the Executive Committee of Physicians for the Prevention of Gun Violence (PPGV), a statewide organization with over 350 members. As we have studied the problem of gun violence, one of the more useful things we have learned is how important it is to keep firearms out of the hands of "dangerous" people (domestic abusers, seriously angry people, certain depressed individuals.) We are convinced that requiring background checks on all gun sales would help to accomplish this, and every major national medical organization has come to the same conclusion (Reference). It is clear that this will not happen nationally in the near future, so it will need to be done locally. This brings me to House Bill 4795 (an amendment of PA 319), which, if it ultimately became Michigan law, would penalize "any local unit of government" and its employees for attempting to do just that.

This makes me angry for two reasons: First, it is certain that implementation of background checks for all gun sales would save lives, while also, by the way, saving tax dollars and secondly, this bill is the product of the same misguided mindset that has given us physician "gag" laws as well as prohibition of use of federal tax dollars to fund much needed research on gun violence.

PA319 is a bad law and HB4795 would make it even more offensive.

Mr Chairman, I have found myself wondering what the mandate of your committee actually is. If it is, as I suspect, to assist local governments in addressing their needs, I urge you to reject HB4795 and I also suggest that you recommend repeal of PA319 to the Legislature.

Reference: Annals of Internal Medicine; April 2015, Volume 162, No.7

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