

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2021

H.B. 525  
Apr 8, 2021  
HOUSE PRINCIPAL CLERK

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HOUSE BILL DRH40275-ML-88A

Short Title: Allow ERPOs to Prevent Suicides & Save Lives. (Public)

Sponsors: Representative Morey.

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
2 AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE THE ISSUANCE OF AN EXTREME RISK PROTECTION  
3 ORDER TO RESTRICT TEMPORARILY A PERSON'S ACCESS TO FIREARMS IF  
4 THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT THE PERSON POSES A DANGER OF PHYSICAL HARM  
5 TO SELF OR OTHERS.

6 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

7 **SECTION 1.** The General Statutes are amended by adding a new Chapter to read:

8 **"Chapter 50E.**

9 **"Extreme Risk Protection Orders.**

10 **"§ 50E-1. Title of Chapter.**

11 This Chapter may be cited as the "Extreme Risk Protection Orders Act."

12 **"§ 50E-2. Legislative findings and purpose.**

13 (a) Legislative Findings. – The General Assembly finds all of the following:

14 (1) Gun violence is a public health epidemic that ravages communities and  
15 families in North Carolina and the country.

16 (2) Every year almost 40,000 people are killed by gun violence, an average of 108  
17 people per day. In 2018, 1,416 North Carolinians were killed by gun violence,  
18 almost four lives lost every day.

19 (3) Firearm suicides are the most common type of firearm death in the United  
20 States. In 2018, one-half of the 48,344 suicides in the United States involved  
21 a firearm. In 2018, 813 North Carolinians died from firearm suicide.

22 (b) Purpose. – The purpose of this Chapter is to reduce gun deaths and injuries, while  
23 respecting constitutional rights, by providing a court procedure for concerned citizens and law  
24 enforcement to obtain an order temporarily restricting a person's access to firearms. The court  
25 orders authorized under this Chapter are intended to be limited to situations in which the person  
26 poses a significant danger of harming themselves or others by possessing a firearm and include  
27 standards and safeguards to protect the rights of respondents and due process of law.

28 **"§ 50E-3. Definitions.**

29 The following definitions apply in this Chapter:

30 (1) Extreme Risk Protection Order or ERPO. – An order granted under this  
31 Chapter, which includes a remedy authorized under G.S. 50E-6.

32 (2) Family or household member. – Any of the following:

33 a. A person related by blood, marriage, or adoption to the respondent.

34 b. A current or former dating partner of the respondent.



1           c.     A person who has a child in common with the respondent, regardless  
2               of whether the person has been married to the respondent or has lived  
3               together with the respondent at any time.

4           d.     A domestic partner of the respondent.

5           e.     A person who has a biological or legal parent-child relationship with  
6               the respondent, including stepparents, stepchildren, grandparents, and  
7               grandchildren.

8           f.     A person who is acting or has acted as the respondent's legal guardian.

9           (3)    Firearm. – Any weapon, including a starter gun, which will or is designed to  
10               or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive,  
11               or its frame or receiver.

12           (4)    Petitioner. – The person who petitions for an ERPO under this Chapter.

13           (5)    Respondent. – The person who is identified as the respondent in a petition  
14               filed under this Chapter.

15   **"§ 50E-4. Commencement of action.**

16       (a)    Petition. – Any of the following may file a verified petition in district court for an  
17    ERPO:

18           (1)    A family or household member.

19           (2)    A current or former spouse or dating partner.

20           (3)    A law enforcement officer or agency.

21           (4)    A health care provider.

22       (b)    Filing Location. – A petition for an ERPO under this Chapter may be filed in any  
23    county permitted under G.S. 1-82.

24       (c)    Required Information in Petition. – A petition for an ERPO under this Chapter shall  
25    include all of the following:

26           (1)    An allegation that the respondent poses a danger of physical harm to self or  
27               others by having in his or her care, custody, possession, ownership, or control  
28               a firearm. If the petitioner is seeking an ex parte ERPO, the petition shall  
29               include an allegation that the respondent poses an imminent danger of physical  
30               harm to self or others by having in his or her care, custody, possession,  
31               ownership, or control a firearm. The allegation required under this subdivision  
32               shall include facts to support the allegation.

33           (2)    An identification, to the best of the petitioner's knowledge, of the number,  
34               types, and locations of firearms under the respondent's custody or control.

35           (3)    An identification of any existing protection order under State law governing  
36               the respondent.

37           (4)    An identification of any pending lawsuits, complaints, petitions, or other  
38               actions between the petitioner and the respondent.

39       (d)    Verification of Terms of Existing Orders. – The clerk of court shall verify the terms  
40    of any existing protection orders governing the petitioner and respondent. The court shall not  
41    delay granting relief because of the existence of a pending action between the petitioner and  
42    respondent or the necessity of verifying the terms of an existing protection order. A petition for  
43    an ERPO under this Chapter may be granted whether or not there is a pending action between  
44    the petitioner and the respondent.

45       (e)    Nondisclosure of Address. – A petitioner with a current and valid Address  
46    Confidentiality Program authorization card issued pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 15C of  
47    the General Statutes may use the substitute address designated by the Address Confidentiality  
48    Program when filing with the court any document required under this Chapter. If a petitioner  
49    does not have a current and valid Address Confidentiality Program authorization card, but  
50    submits to the court a copy of a protective order without attachments, if any, issued to the  
51    petitioner under G.S. 50B-3 or a lawful order of any court of competent jurisdiction restricting

1 the access or contact of one or more persons with the petitioner, accompanied by a signed  
2 statement that the petitioner has good reason to believe that the physical safety of the petitioner  
3 or a member of the petitioner's family residing with the petitioner would be jeopardized if the  
4 petitioner's address were open to public inspection, that petitioner's address shall be kept  
5 confidential.

6 (f) Court Costs and Attorneys' Fees. – No court costs or attorneys' fees shall be assessed  
7 for the filing or service of the petition, or the service of any ERPOs, except as provided in  
8 G.S. 1A-1, Rule 11.

9 (g) Electronic Filing. – All documents filed, issued, registered, or served in an action  
10 under this Chapter relating to an ERPO may be filed electronically.

11 (h) Report. – Beginning December 1, 2022, and occurring annually thereafter, the  
12 Administrative Office of the Courts shall submit a report to the Joint Legislative Oversight  
13 Committee on Justice and Public Safety and the Fiscal Research Division that includes all of the  
14 following information:

15 (1) The number of petitions filed under this Chapter during the prior calendar  
16 year.

17 (2) The number of ex parte ERPOs issued during the prior calendar year.

18 (3) The number of ex parte ERPOs the courts declined to issue during the prior  
19 calendar year, and justification for why each was declined.

20 (4) The number of full ERPOs issued during the prior calendar year.

21 (5) The number of full ERPOs the courts declined to issue during the prior  
22 calendar year, and justification for why each was declined.

23 **"§ 50E-5. Process.**

24 (a) Summons Required. – Except as otherwise provided in G.S. 50E-8, a petition for an  
25 ERPO requires that a summons be issued and served not later than five days prior to the date set  
26 for the full ERPO hearing. Attachments to the summons shall include the petition for any ERPO,  
27 any ex parte ERPO that has been issued and the notice of hearing on the ex parte ERPO, and a  
28 description of what an ERPO is.

29 (b) Service of the Summons and Attachments. – The clerk of court shall effect service of  
30 the summons and any attachments through the appropriate law enforcement agency where the  
31 respondent is to be served.

32 **"§ 50E-6. ERPO requirements; remedy; mental health or chemical dependency evaluation.**

33 (a) Required Information in ERPO. – An ERPO issued under this Chapter shall include  
34 all of the following:

35 (1) A statement of the grounds supporting issuance of the ERPO.

36 (2) The date and time the ERPO was issued.

37 (3) The date and time the ERPO expires.

38 (4) Whether a mental health evaluation or chemical dependency evaluation of the  
39 respondent is required.

40 (5) The address of the court in which any responsive pleading may be filed.

41 (6) A description of the requirements for relinquishment and retrieval of any  
42 firearms, ammunition, permits to purchase firearms, and permits to carry  
43 concealed firearms that are in the care, custody, ownership, or control of the  
44 respondent.

45 (7) A description of the process for seeking termination of the ERPO.

46 (8) A statement that a violation of the ERPO is punishable as a Class A1  
47 misdemeanor.

48 (b) Remedy Granted. – Upon issuance of an ERPO, including an ex parte ERPO, the  
49 court shall order the respondent to surrender to the sheriff all firearms, ammunition, permits to  
50 purchase firearms, and permits to carry concealed firearms that are in the care, custody,  
51 possession, ownership, or control of the respondent.

1       (c) Mental Health or Chemical Dependency Evaluation. – During a hearing for issuance  
2 of an ERPO, the court shall consider whether a mental health evaluation or chemical dependency  
3 evaluation of the respondent is appropriate and may order the respondent to undergo evaluation  
4 if appropriate.

5 **"§ 50E-7. Hearing and issuance of a full Extreme Risk Protection Order.**

6       (a) Hearing. – A court shall hold a hearing on a petition for a full ERPO no later than 10  
7 days from either of the following dates:

8           (1) If an ex parte ERPO has been issued, the date the ex parte ERPO was issued.

9           (2) If subdivision (1) of this subsection does not apply, the date the petition for a  
10 full ERPO was filed with the court.

11       A continuance shall be limited to one extension of no more than 10 days unless all parties  
12 consent or good cause is shown.

13       (b) Order. – A court may issue a full ERPO if all of the following requirements are met:

14           (1) The court finds by a preponderance of the evidence that the respondent poses  
15 a danger of causing physical harm to self or others by having in his or her  
16 custody a firearm. In determining whether the requirement set forth in this  
17 subdivision is met, the court may consider any relevant evidence, including,  
18 but not limited to, any of the following:

19           a. A recent act or threat of violence by the respondent against himself,  
20 herself, or others, whether or not the violence or threat of violence  
21 involves a firearm.

22           b. An act or threat of violence by the respondent within the past 12  
23 months, including, but not limited to, acts or threats of violence by the  
24 respondent against himself, herself, or others.

25           c. Evidence of the respondent being seriously mentally ill or having  
26 recurring mental health issues.

27           d. A violation by the respondent of an order issued under Chapter 50B,  
28 50C, or 50D of the General Statutes.

29           e. A previous or existing ERPO issued against the respondent.

30           f. A violation of a previous or existing ERPO issued against the  
31 respondent.

32           g. Whether the respondent, in this State or any other state, has been  
33 convicted of, had adjudication withheld on, or pled nolo contendere to  
34 a crime that constitutes domestic violence as defined in G.S. 50B-1.

35           h. Whether the respondent has used, or has threatened to use, against  
36 himself, herself, or others, any weapons.

37           i. The unlawful or reckless use, display, or brandishing of a firearm by  
38 the respondent.

39           j. The recurring use of, or threat to use, physical force by the respondent  
40 against another person or the respondent stalking another person.

41           k. Whether the respondent, in this State or any other state, has been  
42 arrested for, convicted of, had adjudication withheld on, or pled nolo  
43 contendere to a crime involving violence or a threat of violence.

44           l. Corroborated evidence of the abuse of controlled substances or alcohol  
45 by the respondent.

46           m. Evidence of recent acquisition of firearms or ammunition by the  
47 respondent.

48           n. Any relevant information from family and household members  
49 concerning the respondent.

50           o. Witness testimony, taken while the witness is under oath, relating to  
51 the matter before the court.

1           (2)    Process was served on the respondent in accordance with the requirements of  
2           this Article.

3           (3)    Notice of hearing was given to the respondent in accordance with the  
4           requirements of this Article.

5   **"§ 50E-8. Hearing and issuance of an ex parte Extreme Risk Protection Order.**

6           (a)    Hearing. – Upon receipt of a petition for an ex parte ERPO, the court shall hold a  
7           hearing in person on the day the petition is filed or the judicial day immediately following the  
8           day the petition is filed.

9           (b)    Order. – If it clearly appears to the court from specific facts shown that the respondent  
10          poses an imminent danger of causing physical harm to self or others by having in his or her  
11          custody a firearm, a judge or magistrate of district court may issue an ex parte ERPO before a  
12          hearing for a full ERPO and without evidence of service of process or notice.

13          (c)    Requirements. – An ex parte ERPO granted without notice shall meet all of the  
14          following requirements:

15               (1)    The ERPO shall be endorsed with the date and hour of issuance.

16               (2)    The ERPO shall be filed immediately in the clerk's office and entered of  
17               record.

18               (3)    The ERPO shall include a statement detailing why the ERPO was granted  
19               without notice.

20               (4)    The ERPO shall include the applicable information required under  
21               G.S. 50E-6(a).

22               (5)    The ERPO shall expire by its terms within a specified amount of time after  
23               entry, not to exceed the limits set forth in G.S. 50E-10(a).

24               (6)    The ERPO shall give notice of the date of hearing on the ex parte ERPO.

25          (d)    Appearance by Respondent. – If the respondent appears in court for a hearing on an  
26          ex parte ERPO, the respondent may elect to file a general appearance and testify. Any resulting  
27          ERPO may be an ex parte ERPO governed by this section. Notwithstanding the requirements of  
28          this section, if all requirements of G.S. 50E-7 have been met, the court may issue a full ERPO.

29          (e)    Court Out of Session. – When the court is not in session, the petitioner may file for  
30          an ex parte ERPO before any judge or magistrate designated to grant relief under this Article. If  
31          the judge or magistrate finds that the requirements of subsection (a) of this section have been  
32          met, the judge or magistrate may issue an ex parte ERPO. The chief district court judge may  
33          designate for each county at least one judge or magistrate to be reasonably available to issue ex  
34          parte ERPOs when the court is not in session.

35          (f)    Video Conference. – Hearings held to consider ex parte relief pursuant to subsection  
36          (a) of this section may be held via video conference.

37   **"§ 50E-9. Surrender, retrieval, and disposal of firearms.**

38          (a)    Surrender of Firearms. – Upon service of an ERPO, the respondent shall immediately  
39          surrender to the sheriff possession of all firearms, ammunition, permits to purchase firearms, and  
40          permits to carry concealed firearms that are in the care, custody, possession, ownership, or control  
41          of the respondent. In the event that weapons cannot be surrendered at the time the ERPO is  
42          served, the respondent shall surrender the firearms, ammunitions, and permits to the sheriff  
43          within 24 hours of service at a time and place specified by the sheriff. The sheriff shall store the  
44          firearms or contract with a licensed firearms dealer to provide storage.

45          (b)    Failure to Surrender. – Upon the sworn statement of the petitioner or the sheriff  
46          alleging that the respondent has failed to comply with the surrender of firearms required under  
47          subsection (a) of this section, the court shall determine whether probable cause exists to believe  
48          that the respondent has failed to surrender all firearms in his or her care, custody, possession,  
49          ownership, or control. If probable cause exists, the court shall issue a warrant describing the  
50          firearms and authorizing (i) a search of the locations where the firearms are reasonably believed  
51          to be and (ii) seizure of any firearms discovered pursuant to the search.

1       (c) Receipt. – At the time of surrender or seizure, the sheriff taking possession of a  
2 firearm shall issue a receipt identifying all firearms that have been surrendered or seized and shall  
3 provide a copy of the receipt to the respondent. Within 48 hours after issuing the receipt, the  
4 officer shall file the original receipt with the court and shall also retain a copy for the sheriff's  
5 records.

6       (d) Fee. – The sheriff may charge the respondent a reasonable fee for the storage of any  
7 firearms and ammunition taken pursuant to an ERPO. The fees are payable to the sheriff. The  
8 sheriff shall transmit the proceeds of these fees to the county finance officer. The fees shall be  
9 used by the sheriff to pay the costs of administering this section and for other law enforcement  
10 purposes. The county shall expend the restricted funds for these purposes only. The sheriff shall  
11 not release firearms, ammunition, or permits without a court order granting the release. The  
12 respondent shall remit all fees owed prior to the authorized return of any firearms, ammunition,  
13 or permits. The sheriff shall not incur any civil or criminal liability for alleged damage or  
14 deterioration due to storage or transportation of any firearms or ammunition held pursuant to this  
15 section.

16       (e) Retrieval. – If the court does not enter a full ERPO when the ex parte ERPO expires,  
17 the respondent may retrieve any firearms, ammunition, or permits surrendered to the sheriff  
18 unless the court finds that the respondent is otherwise precluded from owning or possessing a  
19 firearm pursuant to State or federal law.

20       (f) Motion for Return. – The respondent may request the return of any firearms,  
21 ammunition, or permits surrendered by filing a motion with the court no later than 90 days after  
22 the expiration of the ERPO. Unless the court finds that the respondent is otherwise precluded  
23 from owning or possessing a firearm pursuant to State or federal law, all firearms, ammunition,  
24 and permits surrendered by the respondent shall be returned within 30 days of the date the motion  
25 was received by the court.

26       (g) Motion for Return by Third Party. – A third-party owner of firearms or ammunition  
27 who is otherwise eligible to possess the items may file a motion requesting the return to the third  
28 party of any of the items in the possession of the sheriff surrendered or seized as a result of the  
29 entry of an ERPO. The motion must be filed not later than 30 days after the surrender or seizure  
30 of the items by the sheriff. The third-party owner shall also (i) provide proof of ownership of the  
31 firearms or ammunition and (ii) certify that the third-party owner shall not allow the respondent  
32 to have access to the firearms or ammunition. Upon receipt of the third party's motion, the court  
33 shall schedule a hearing and provide written notice to all parties and the sheriff. The court shall  
34 order return of the items to the third party unless the third-party owner fails to provide proof of  
35 ownership or certification as required under this subsection, or the court determines that the third  
36 party is disqualified from owning or possessing the items pursuant to State or federal law. If the  
37 court orders the return of the items to the third party, the third party is not required to pay any  
38 fees imposed under subsection (d) of this section. If the court denies the return of the items to the  
39 third party, the items shall be disposed of by the sheriff as provided in subsection (h) of this  
40 section.

41       (h) Disposal of Firearms. – If the respondent or a third-party owner does not file a motion  
42 within the applicable time period prescribed by this section requesting the return of any  
43 surrendered firearms, ammunition, or permits; if the court determines that the respondent or  
44 third-party owner is precluded from regaining possession of any surrendered firearms,  
45 ammunition, or permits; or if the respondent fails to remit all fees owed for the storage of the  
46 firearms or ammunition within 30 days of the entry of the order granting the return of the  
47 firearms, ammunition, or permits, the sheriff who has control of the firearms, ammunition, or  
48 permits shall give notice to the respondent and the sheriff shall apply to the court for an order of  
49 disposition of the firearms, ammunition, or permits. The judge, after a hearing, may order the  
50 sheriff in possession, or the sheriff's duly authorized agent, to destroy the firearms, ammunition,  
51 and permits, or to dispose of the firearms, ammunition, and permits in one or more of the ways

1 authorized by law, including subdivision (4b), (5), or (6) of G.S. 14-269.1. The sheriff shall  
2 maintain a record of any firearms, ammunition, and permits destroyed in accordance with this  
3 subsection. If a sale by the sheriff does occur, any proceeds from the sale after deducting any  
4 costs associated with the storage and sale, and, in accordance with all applicable State and federal  
5 law, shall be provided to the respondent if requested by the respondent by motion made before  
6 the hearing or at the hearing and if ordered by the judge.

7 **"§ 50E-10. Duration; renewal of ERPOs.**

8 (a) Duration of Ex Parte ERPO. – Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, an ex  
9 parte ERPO shall be effective until the date a hearing is held under G.S. 50E-7. If a hearing is  
10 not held or a continuance was not granted, an ex parte ERPO shall be effective for not more than  
11 10 days from the date the ex parte ERPO was issued.

12 (b) Duration of Full ERPO. – A full ERPO shall be effective for a fixed period of time  
13 not to exceed one year.

14 (c) Renewal. – Any ERPO may be renewed one or more times, as required, provided that  
15 the requirements of G.S. 50E-7 or G.S. 50E-8, as appropriate, are satisfied. The court may renew  
16 an ERPO, including an ERPO that previously has been renewed, upon a motion by the petitioner  
17 filed before the expiration of the current ERPO. Upon a motion for a renewal, the court shall hold  
18 a hearing no later than 10 days after the date the motion is filed in court. The court may renew  
19 an ex parte ERPO if the court finds by clear, cogent, and convincing evidence that there has been  
20 no material change in relevant circumstances since entry of the ex parte ERPO. The court may  
21 renew a full ERPO if the court finds by a preponderance of the evidence that there has been no  
22 material change in relevant circumstances since entry of the full ERPO. The commission of an  
23 act of unlawful conduct by the respondent after entry of the current ERPO is not required for an  
24 ERPO to be renewed. If the motion for renewal is uncontested and the petitioner seeks no  
25 modification of the ERPO, the ERPO may be renewed if the petitioner's motion or affidavit states  
26 that there has been no material change in relevant circumstances since entry of the ERPO and  
27 states the reason for the requested renewal. Renewals may be granted only in open court.

28 (d) Expiration Date. – An ERPO expiring on a day the court is not open for business shall  
29 expire in accordance with the provisions of Rule 6(a) of the Rules of Civil Procedure, G.S. 1A-1.

30 **"§ 50E-11. Termination of an Extreme Risk Protection Order.**

31 (a) Motion. – The respondent may request the termination of a full ERPO by filing a  
32 motion with the court. The respondent may submit no more than one motion for termination for  
33 every 12-month period the full ERPO is in effect, starting from the date of the full ERPO and  
34 continuing through any renewals.

35 (b) Hearing. – Upon receipt of a request for a hearing to terminate a full ERPO, the court  
36 shall set a date for a hearing. Notice of the request for a hearing shall be served on the petitioner  
37 in accordance with Rule 4 of the Rules of Civil Procedure. The court shall set the date for the  
38 hearing no sooner than 14 days and no later than 30 days from the date of service of the request  
39 upon the petitioner.

40 (c) Burden of Proof; Termination. – The respondent shall have the burden of proving, by  
41 a preponderance of the evidence, that the respondent does not pose a danger of causing physical  
42 harm to self or others by having in his or her care, custody, possession, ownership, or control a  
43 firearm. If the court finds after the hearing that the respondent has met his or her burden, the  
44 court shall terminate the full ERPO.

45 **"§ 50E-12. Notice.**

46 (a) Notice Law Enforcement; Entry into National Database. – The clerk of court shall  
47 deliver on the same day that an ERPO is issued a certified copy of that ERPO to the sheriff of  
48 the county in which the ERPO is issued. Any order extending, modifying, or revoking an ERPO  
49 shall be promptly delivered to the sheriff by the clerk and served in a manner provided for service  
50 of process in accordance with the provisions of this section. The sheriff shall provide for prompt  
51 entry of the ERPO into the National Crime Information Center registry and shall provide for

1 access of such orders to the courts on a 24-hour-a-day basis. Modifications, terminations,  
2 renewals, and dismissals of the ERPO shall also be promptly entered. A copy of the ERPO shall  
3 be issued promptly to and retained by the police department of the municipality of the petitioner's  
4 residence. If the petitioner's residence is not located in a municipality or is in a municipality with  
5 no police department, copies shall be issued promptly to and retained by the sheriff of the county  
6 in which the petitioner's residence is located.

7 (b) Notice to Respondent. – If the respondent was not present in court when the ERPO  
8 was issued, the respondent may be served in the manner provided for service of process in civil  
9 proceedings in accordance with Rule 4(j) of the Rules of Civil Procedure. If the summons has  
10 not yet been served upon the respondent, it shall be served with the ERPO. Law enforcement  
11 agencies shall accept receipt of copies of the ERPO issued by the clerk of court by electronic  
12 transmission for service on respondents.

13 (c) Notice to Third Parties. – If the petitioner for an ERPO is a law enforcement officer  
14 or agency, the officer or agency shall make a good-faith effort to provide notice of the petition  
15 to any known third party who may be at risk of unlawful conduct from the respondent.

16 **"§ 50E-13. Prohibition; violation.**

17 (a) Prohibition. – It is unlawful for any person to possess, purchase, or receive, or attempt  
18 to possess, purchase, or receive a firearm, ammunition, or permits to purchase or carry concealed  
19 firearms, for so long as an ERPO entered against that person in accordance with this Chapter is  
20 in effect.

21 (b) Violation. – A person who violates subsection (a) of this section or any other term of  
22 an ERPO entered pursuant to this Chapter is guilty of a Class A1 misdemeanor.

23 **"§ 50E-14. False statement regarding ERPO a misdemeanor.**

24 A person who knowingly makes a false statement when petitioning for an ERPO under this  
25 Chapter, or who knowingly makes a false statement to a law enforcement agency or officer that  
26 an ERPO entered pursuant to this Chapter remains in effect, is guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor.

27 **"§ 50E-15. Remedies not exclusive.**

28 The remedies provided by this Chapter are not exclusive but are additional to other remedies  
29 provided under law.

30 **"§ 50E-16. Other authority retained.**

31 This Chapter does not affect the ability of a law enforcement officer to remove a firearm,  
32 permit to purchase firearms, or permit to carry concealed firearms from any person, or conduct  
33 any search and seizure for firearms, pursuant to other lawful authority.

34 **"§ 50E-17. Liability.**

35 Except as provided in G.S. 50E-13 or G.S. 50E-14, this Chapter shall not be interpreted to  
36 impose any criminal or civil liability on any person or entity for acts or omissions related to  
37 obtaining an ERPO, including reporting, declining to report, investigating, declining to  
38 investigate, filing, or declining to file a petition under this Chapter."

39 **SECTION 2.** Chapter 15C of the General Statutes reads as rewritten:

40 **"Chapter 15C.**

41 **"Address Confidentiality Program.**

42 **"§ 15C-1. Purpose.**

43 The purpose of this Chapter is to enable the State and the agencies of North Carolina to  
44 respond to requests for public records without disclosing the location of a petitioner for an  
45 Extreme Risk Protection Order or a victim of domestic violence, sexual offense, stalking, or  
46 human trafficking; to enable interagency cooperation in providing address confidentiality for  
47 ~~victims~~ a petitioner for an Extreme Risk Protection Order or a victim of domestic violence, sexual  
48 offense, stalking, or human trafficking; and to enable the State and its agencies to accept a  
49 program participant's use of an address designated by the Office of the Attorney General as a  
50 substitute address.

51 **"§ 15C-2. Definitions.**



1 The following definitions apply in this Chapter:

2 ...

3 (2) Address Confidentiality Program or Program. – A program in the Office of  
4 the Attorney General to protect the confidentiality of the address of an ERPO  
5 petitioner or a relocated victim of domestic violence, sexual offense, or  
6 stalking to prevent the petitioner's or victim's assailants or potential assailants  
7 from finding the petitioner or victim through public records.

8 ...

9 (5a) ERPO petitioner. – The person who petitions for an Extreme Risk Protection  
10 Order under Chapter 50E of the General Statutes.

11 ...

12 **"§ 15C-3. Address Confidentiality Program.**

13 The General Assembly establishes the Address Confidentiality Program in the Office of the  
14 Attorney General to protect the confidentiality of the address of an ERPO petitioner or a relocated  
15 victim of domestic violence, sexual offense, stalking, or human trafficking to prevent the  
16 petitioner's or victim's assailants or potential assailants from finding the petitioner or victim  
17 through public records. Under this Program, the Attorney General shall designate a substitute  
18 address for a program participant and act as the agent of the program participant for purposes of  
19 service of process and receiving and forwarding first-class mail or certified or registered mail.  
20 The Attorney General shall not be required to forward any mail other than first-class mail or  
21 certified or registered mail to the program participant. The Attorney General shall not be required  
22 to track or otherwise maintain records of any mail received on behalf of a program participant  
23 unless the mail is certified or registered mail.

24 **"§ 15C-4. Filing and certification of applications; authorization card.**

25 (a) An individual who wants to participate in the Address Confidentiality Program shall  
26 file an application with the Attorney General with the assistance of an application assistant. Any  
27 of the following individuals may apply to the Attorney General to have an address designated by  
28 the Attorney General to serve as the substitute address of the individual:

29 (1) An adult individual.

30 (2) A parent or guardian acting on behalf of a minor when the minor resides with  
31 the individual.

32 (3) A guardian acting on behalf of an incapacitated individual.

33 (b) The application shall be dated, signed, and verified by the applicant and shall be  
34 signed by the application assistant who assisted in the preparation of the application.

35 (c) The application shall contain all of the following:

36 (1) A statement by the applicant that the applicant is an ERPO petitioner or a  
37 victim of domestic violence, sexual offense, stalking, or human trafficking  
38 and that the applicant fears for the applicant's safety or the safety of the  
39 applicant's child.

40 (2) ~~Evidence~~ Except for an applicant that is an ERPO petitioner, evidence that the  
41 applicant is a victim of domestic violence, sexual offense, stalking, or human  
42 trafficking. For an applicant that is an ERPO petitioner, evidence that the  
43 applicant is at risk from violence or other unlawful conduct from the  
44 respondent in a petition filed under Chapter 50E of the General Statutes. This  
45 evidence may include any of the following:

46 a. Law enforcement, court, or other federal or state agency records or  
47 files.

48 b. Documentation from a domestic violence program if the applicant is  
49 alleged to be a victim of domestic violence.

- 1 c. Documentation from a religious, medical, or other professional from
- 2 whom the applicant has sought assistance in dealing with the alleged
- 3 domestic violence, sexual offense, or stalking.
- 4 d. Documentation submitted to support a victim of human trafficking's
- 5 application for federal assistance or benefits under federal human
- 6 trafficking laws.

7 ...

8 (4) ~~A~~ Except for an applicant that is an ERPO petitioner, a statement by the

9 applicant that the applicant has or will confidentially relocate in North

10 Carolina.

11 ...

12 (7) The address that the applicant requests not to be disclosed by the Attorney

13 General that directly relates to the increased risk of domestic violence, sexual

14 offense, ~~or stalking~~ stalking, or other unlawful conduct.

15 ...."

16 **SECTION 3.** Development of Forms. – The Administrative Office of the Courts

17 shall develop the appropriate forms to implement the processes provided under Chapter 50E of

18 the General Statutes, as enacted by Section 1 of this act.

19 **SECTION 4.** Effective Date. – This act becomes effective December 1, 2021.