

Date: April 16, 2015

TO: The Honorable Floyd Prozanski, Chair
Senate Judiciary Committee

FROM: Katrina Hedberg, MD, MPH
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SUBJECT: SB 945

Chair Prozanski and members of the committee, I am writing to provide information on deaths due to firearm injuries in Oregon children.

Every year, firearms cause approximately 30,000 deaths in the U.S., corresponding to deaths in 8 children and 75 adults every day, or one person every 17 minutes. Firearm-related deaths (including suicide) are one of the three leading causes of death in American youth.

During the decade from 2003 through 2012 in Oregon, 103 children age <18 years died from firearm injuries. Of these 103 deaths, 52 were suicides; 45 were homicides; four were unintentional injury; one was due to legal intervention; and one was undetermined.

During this same period, Oregon children age 7 through 17 years killed 22 people (11 children and 11 adults); 4 of the suspects were <15 years of age, and 18 suspects were age 15 through 17 years. The relationship between victim and suspect included: family member (n=7), acquaintance (n=5), rival gang member (n=3), friend (n=2), girl/boyfriend (n=1), stranger (n=1); 3 were unknown. The types of firearms involved included: handgun (n=12), rifle (n=3), shotgun (n=3), and unknown (n=4).

The most recent Oregon-specific data we have is from a study published in the medical journal *Pediatrics* in 2005. This study found that about 40% of households in Oregon had firearms, approximately 58,000 children lived in households with loaded firearms, and half of the children lived in households where the loaded firearms were unlocked.

Several medical societies support specific measures for patient safety, including the implications of keeping firearms in the home and appropriate storage. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that pediatricians teach parents that the safest home for a child or adolescent is one without firearms, and urge parents who possess guns to prevent access to those guns by children. The American Medical Association states: “Gun violence in America has reached epidemic proportions and the horrific school shootings in Newtown, CT, has increased the sense of urgency to find workable solutions to reduce the epidemic of gun violence...in America.” The American Academy of Family Physicians “strongly supports legislation restricting unsupervised access to both firearms and ammunition by children.”

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information. I would be pleased to provide the committee with additional information as needed.

References.

Okoro CA, Nelson DE, Mercy JA, et al. Prevalence of household firearms and firearm-storage practices in the 50 states and the District of Columbia: Findings from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2002. *Pediatrics* 2005; 116: e370. See <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/116/3/e370.full.html>.

American Academy of Pediatrics, Council on Injury, Violence, and Poison Prevention Executive Committee. Firearm-related injuries affecting the pediatric population. *Pediatrics*, 2012: 130; e1416. Available at: <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/130/5/e1416.full.html>.

American Medical Association. Violence Prevention. Available at: <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/advocacy/topics/violence-prevention.page>

American Academy of Family Physicians. Firearms and Safety Issues. See: <http://www.aafp.org/about/policies/all/weapons-laws.html>