

Written Testimony of Paul Kemp for the Senate Committee on Education

Thank you Chairman Wagner and the members of the Committee, for holding this important hearing on SB801.

My name is Paul Kemp. I've been an Oregon resident since 1985. I'm a gun owner and I enjoy target shooting with my son too. Both my children were born and raised here in Oregon. I am also a founding board member of Gun Owners for Responsible Ownership, or GOFRO. I support education, but I urge you to vote no on SB801.

SB 801 is well-intentioned but the training it proposes will not keep children safe from improperly-stored firearms. This legislation may actually increase the risks to children by creating a false sense of security that leads parents to neglect safe storage.

As a gun owner and a parent, I know it makes sense to tell young children not to touch a firearm they encounter. But I have learned that even Eddie Eagle, the child training program promoted by the NRA is ineffective in keeping young kids from picking up a gun when they encounter it.* No educator should endorse the notion that 30 minutes of instruction to a classroom of first graders will counteract the curiosity and excitement a child feels when he finds a gun.

The message the bill's sponsors want to send can only be effective when it is an element of sound firearm safety training programs that clearly prioritize adult

responsibility and safe storage, for example the BeSmart the education program of Mom's Demand Action. An ineffective classroom training module creates the risk that some parents, whether or not they own guns, will think their children have learned how to be safe around guns. Parents may rely on it and fail to take real safety precautions.

There is nothing more important to responsible gun owners than the safety of children. I personally and as a GOFRO board member will always enthusiastically support legislation that provides real gun safety training. But it must be directed towards **adults!** SB 801 will do nothing useful and may actually harm the children it aims to protect.

I would also like to add that across the country teachers, school administrators and students have to practice lock down drills. Teachers, school administrators and law enforcement have to practice and drill for active shooter events. Why are we, gun owners and non-gun owners plus the gun industry adding more to the plate of teachers and school administrators? Why are we putting this additional burden on teachers and their young students, why not hold irresponsible gun owners responsible for reckless and careless firearm storage that results in injury or death to children. We need to change the behavior of the **ADULTS!**

My daughter is a 4th grade teacher in the Portland metro area. She and her students already have lock down drills. My daughter has endured active shooter training drills with law enforcement. No other high income country in the world has to take these steps, except for the USA!

I've taken my son to firearm safety classes. But, I've always locked up my firearms securely and unloaded. As a young child I also took firearm safety classes. My parents also locked up their firearms securely and unloaded, as did my uncles, grandfathers, etc.

*The following text is an abstract of "An Evaluation of Two Procedures for Training Skills to Prevent Gun Play in Children. The authors for this paper were Michael B. Himle, Raymond G. Miltenberger, Brian J. Gatheridge and Christopher A. Flessner. The paper was published January 2004, Volume 113/Issue 1 of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Abstract

Objective. Unintentional firearm injuries threaten the safety of children in the United States. Despite the occurrence of these injuries, few studies have evaluated the effectiveness of child-based programs designed to teach children gun-safety skills. This study compared 2 programs that were designed to reduce gun play in preschool children.

Methods. A between-groups no-treatment control design was used. Children were randomly assigned to either 1 of 2 firearm-injury prevention programs or a no-treatment control condition. Participant recruitment, training, and data collection occurred in preschools and children's homes located in a midwestern city with a population of approximately 80 000. Thirty-one 4- and 5-year-old children participated in the study.

The effectiveness of the National Rifle Association's Eddie Eagle GunSafe Program and a behavioral skills training program using instruction, modeling, rehearsal, and feedback was evaluated. Children were issued 0 to 3 ratings on the basis of their ability to say correctly the safety message and similar ratings on the basis of observations of their ability to perform correctly the skills in the classroom and when placed in a realistic simulation.

Results. Both programs were effective for teaching children to reproduce verbally the gun-safety message. The behavioral skills training program but not the Eddie Eagle GunSafe Program was effective for teaching children to perform gun-safety skills during a supervised role play, but the skills were not used when the children were assessed via real-life (in situ) assessments.

Conclusions. Existing programs are insufficient for teaching gun-safety skills to children. Programs that use active learning strategies (modeling, rehearsal, and feedback) are more effective for teaching gun-safety skills as assessed by supervised role plays but still failed to teach the children to use the skills outside the context of the training session. More research is needed to determine the most effective way to promote the use of the skills outside the training session.

Here is a link to the abstract and article:

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/113/1/70>