



Oregon Pediatric Society

A Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Incorporated in Oregon

DATE: February 7, 2020

TO: The Honorable Rep. Tawna Sanchez, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary

FROM: William J. Byrne, MD
Member of the Oregon Pediatric Society

SUBJECT: House Bill 4005 on Safe Gun Storage

My name is Dr. Bill Byrne, and I am a retired Professor of Pediatrics at Oregon Health and Science University and a member of the Oregon Pediatric Society (OPS), the state chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. OPS membership is committed to improving the health and well-being of all Oregon children, which includes common sense ways to keep kids safer. OPS strongly urges your committee to support our legislative priority this year, House Bill 4005, requiring gun owners to lock-up their firearms when not in use, to report to law enforcement missing firearms, and to supervise minors when they are handling firearms.

"Guns don't shoot people, people do." From this often-heard mantra, it logically follows that gun owners have a responsibility to control who has access to or might use their weapons. This responsibility requires weapons be secured, minors handling weapons be supervised, and missing weapons be reported. So, why is this legislation necessary? Today about 50,000 Oregon children live in homes with loaded guns. More than half of these are not secured in gun safes, a locked closet, or with a trigger locking mechanism. Curious children or impulsive teens in a moment of depression or anger commit tragic but preventable acts. I was personally involved with a family where a five-year old shot his friend while playing with his father's "hidden" gun. Oregon's suicide rate is 20 percent higher than the national average and when guns are involved the fatality rate is 91% compared to 23% involving overdoses. Securing firearms delays access, buys time, and is literally life-saving.

The need to secure a weapon becomes even more critical when there are children and teenagers in the house, and it is essential when there is a perceived need to keep the firearm loaded. HB-4005 codifies this responsibility and is supported by 58% of Oregonians who own guns. For my OPS colleagues and I, one of the most important features of the bill is that it provides legal reinforcement for the counseling efforts of healthcare providers regarding safe gun-storage practices.

Please join me and the Oregon Pediatric Society in supporting HB 4005 by passing the Oregon Safe Gun Storage bill this legislative session.