

Testimony on HB 4005 – Gun Storage, Reporting Lost and Stolen Guns

Oregon House Judiciary Committee - February 7, 2020

Daniel W. Webster, ScD, MPH

**Professor and Director, Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health**

I offer this written testimony on HB 4005 to convey my opinions, informed by research that I have conducted and research by other respected researchers, about how to strengthen the bill so that it achieves its intended goal of reducing gun violence, suicides, and unintentional shootings. I have been leading research on gun violence and firearm safety for 30 years, authored approximately 130 articles in peer-reviewed scientific journals, and am the lead editor and contributor to *Reducing Gun Violence in America: Informing Policy with Evidence and Analysis* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

I have led two studies that examine the effects of child access prevention (CAP) laws that require gun owners to safely secure firearms away from underage youth. One of these studies was published in the journal *Pediatrics* in 2000 and used data for 50 states through 1997 and found that CAP laws that did not allow for possible felony penalties did not reduce fatal unintentional shootings of underage youth. However, CAP laws that did allow prosecutors to bring felony charges reduced these tragic deaths by an estimated 31 percent. Researchers from Harvard published a subsequent study in 2004 using data through 2000 and also found that CAP laws were associated with significant reductions in unintentional shooting deaths of youth only where felony penalties for violations were possible. A more recent study published in 2018 also found that CAP laws were associated with significantly lower rates of unintentional shooting deaths and firearm suicides involving underage youth only when states had strong CAP laws. Weak CAP laws, which only impose liability for reckless endangerment, were associated with an increased risk of all pediatric firearm injuries.

My colleagues and I have studied the relationship between available penalties in state laws designed to reduce illegal or unsafe access to firearms and the rate at which violators are charged. We found that when Pennsylvania increased penalties for illegal straw purchases, the numbers of charges for this violation skyrocketed. My conclusion from this body of research is that, to reduce deaths and injuries resulting from unsafe storage of firearms, laws must explicitly require safe storage of firearms to prevent underage youth access and that strong penalties must be available to prosecutors that give them an incentive to investigate cases and bring charges for violations that lead to injuries, deaths, or other endangerment of children when the circumstances warrant.

Note: Please use discretion with your personal information in written testimony (i.e., do not add personal information you do not want the public to see). All meeting materials, including your name and any personal information contained in the submitted documents, are posted to the Oregon Legislative Information System (OLIS) and are accessible to all major search engines, including Google, Bing, and Yahoo.