

I have 30+ years as an emergency room physician and a public health specialist. I have first-hand experience with trauma from gunshot wounds in children. I've tried to pick up the pieces. I've had to talk to the parents. It is excruciating. Much of it is preventable.

HB 2510 requires safe storage of firearms to prevent children from accessing them. Unsecured firearms are a prominent cause of injury and death among children - by kids unintentionally shooting themselves or others, by suicide, and by intentional shootings outside of the home. How this happens is no mystery, yet so far we've not taken action to prevent it.

Statistics show the tragic toll of failing to secure firearms from children's access. 4.6 million children in the US live in a home with at least one unlocked and loaded firearm. Every year, nearly 350 children in the U.S. unintentionally shoot themselves or others. 70 percent of these incidents happen inside a home. In Oregon, firearms were the leading cause of death among our children and teens in 2018.

Research from Boston University's School of Public Health shows youth suicides rates are higher in states with high gun ownership rates. An unsecured gun was the single biggest predictor of youth suicide rate in a state, and Oregon was no exception.

Unsecured firearms also fuel gun violence outside the home. In school grounds shooting incidents, almost 80 percent of shooters under 18 obtained their guns from their own home, a relative's home, or from friends.

Oregon's children are our future. They deserve our protection. Passing HB2510 to secure firearms from children's access is critical to addressing the tragedy of Oregon kids' deaths by guns, and is long past due. Safe storage obviously does not prevent gun ownership; it simply requires responsible behavior to protect children. I strongly urge the legislature to pass HB 2510.