



# Oregon Pediatric Society

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

DATE: March 10, 2021

TO: Chair Representative Rachel Prusak, and members of the House Committee on Health Care

FROM: Ryan Hassan, MD, MPH, FAAP  
Oregon Pediatric Society Member

SUBJECT: Support for HB 2510, Safe Gun Storage

My name is Ryan Hassan, MD, MPH. I am a pediatrician practicing in Clackamas, and I support safe gun storage requirements because I don't like it when children die needlessly. When legislation requires gun owners to store their guns safely, more gun owners do store their guns safely, and fewer children get injured or die from gun violence. We know this is true because we have studied rates of injury and death from guns all across the US, and consistently found that one of the most successful ways to reduce gun violence is to implement safe gun storage laws.

I could provide a detailed history of gun rights in the US, and explain how for the first 200 years of our nation's history the second amendment was consistently understood to mean that the federal government could not infringe on a state's rights to keep an armed militia, and how when the second amendment was written, states actually required all men to be members of the state militia, and that those men were trained in the proper use of firearms. I could explain that the only reason that the notion of common-sense gun regulation is thought of as somehow being in conflict with the second amendment today is because of decades of well-organized propaganda by the NRA that started in the 1970s and has been designed to make Americans think that the second amendment provided an individual protection to the right to bear arms; a propaganda campaign that was so successful that it allowed the supreme court to baselessly overturn two centuries of US legal jurisprudence on June 26, 2008, in the case District of Columbia v Heller. But all of that is irrelevant; because it doesn't really matter what our founders intended, or what some corporate lobbyist organization is doing to try to make money, or what perfunctory and arbitrary legal framework some federalist society judges and lawyers have invented to try to defend a fictitious version of history that suits their ideologies. What matters is that when we pass safe gun storage laws, fewer children will be shot and killed each day in the US.

Every day in the US, pediatricians care for children who have suffered needlessly from gun violence, and have to tell grieving families that their loved ones were killed by an unsafely stored firearm.

I could tell you the story of the toddler I cared for in a Pediatric Intensive Care Unit who shot himself in the head after finding his father's loaded gun on the kitchen counter. I could describe



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the months of agony the family suffered while we used a ventilator to keep their baby breathing, and hooked him up to a machine to pump blood through his body when his heart no longer could. I could describe the months of therapy he needed afterwards to return to a semblance of normal life.

Or I could share the story of another child I cared for who, in a moment of impulsive suicidal thinking, was able to find a loaded gun more easily than the phone he could have used to call for help, and ended his own life. These are children and families I will never forget, but their stories are all too common. Every day in the US, 100 adults and 7 children die of gun violence. When we pass safe gun storage laws, that number will be lower.

I've heard that there are many Oregonians testifying in opposition to this bill, and that so far, they have far outnumbered those of us testifying in favor. I could point out that over 80% of Americans support common-sense gun laws, like the requirement for safe gun storage, and that the people who choose to testify are not at all a representation of either popular opinion, or of the best interests of Oregonians. But it doesn't matter how many people wrongly believe that this bill will in some way be bad for them; the evidence is clear: safe gun storage laws reduce the number of children who die of gun violence. **With this bill, fewer kids will die.**

Don't prioritize people's irrational fears of imagined harms over our children's actual risk of real harm. There will always be people who are scared of getting their homes broken into by fictitious villains. People who think we need guns to protect ourselves from the government, as if that is even a sensible notion. People who argue that because rates of violent crime are decreasing, we don't need to take actions to decrease it further, and who don't seem to want to address the ongoing epidemic of unintentional deaths and suicides by firearms that our state is leading the country in.

Listen to the science. Look at the data. Pass this bill, and more parents will be able to tuck their children into bed each night, and fewer of them will have to make funeral arrangements. Fail to pass HB 2510, and every child who dies because they were able to get their hands on an improperly stored firearm will have died because of our failure to act.