



Oregon Pediatric Society

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

DATE: April 22, 2021

TO: Representative Smith Warner, Chair
and Members of the House Committee on Rules

FROM: Alanna Braun, MD, FAAP
Oregon Pediatric Society Board President

SUBJECT: Support for SB 554-A, Safe Gun Storage

My name is Alanna Braun. I am a pediatrician at Doernbecher Children's Hospital, and the board president of the Oregon Pediatric Society, the state chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. I have seen over and over again the devastating toll of unintentional firearm injuries in children: toddlers who thought a firearm was a toy, curious school-aged children, and adolescents contemplating suicide. In every single case, injury would have been prevented if firearms had been stored safely. I write to you in strong support of SB 554 with the safe storage amendments, which OPS strongly endorses.

Approximately 40% of U.S. households with children also have firearms. One in five U.S. households with children contains an unsecured, loaded gun, providing easy access and increasing the risk of youth suicide, unintentional shootings and gun violence.ⁱ In gun owning households, 36% of children under age 10 reported that they had handled the firearms, many without their parents' knowledge.ⁱⁱ

In 2018 alone, 40 Oregon children and adolescents died by firearm: 28 suicides, 8 homicides, two accidental deaths and two undetermined manners of death.^{iii,iv} In the last few years, suicide has been the first or second leading cause of death among Oregonians 10 to 24 years old, with guns being the most common mechanism.^{v,vi} In fact, Oregon has the fastest-growing rate of pediatric suicide by firearm in the country.^{vii,viii}

While data from 2019 suggests a modest decrease in teen suicide, Oregon's teen firearm suicide rate over the last 20 years remains almost 60% higher than the national average. Approximately 90% of suicide attempts using a firearm result in death, compared with fewer than 5% of attempts with other means. Suicidal thoughts are incredibly impulsive. Over 50% of survivors of a suicide attempt report less than 10 minutes between their first thought, and their act. If a child or teen cannot get to a firearm, they are much less likely to die, and the delay created by a safely stored firearm can save lives. The question is not what sort of burden a simple and common-sense rule places on owners of firearms (many of whom do safely store their firearms), but what will be the toll of continuing to do nothing on the children of Oregon.



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To address this crisis, many organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, recommend the enactment of safe storage laws, such as HB 2510.^{ix,x,xii} Numerous studies indicate that these laws increase safe storage practices and decrease both pediatric suicide rates and accidental firearm deaths.^{xii,xiii,xiv,xv,xvi} Currently, 29 states and the District of Columbia have child access prevention (CAP) laws in place.^{xvii} Oregon, however, does not have any statutes governing firearm storage.^{xviii,xix} Safe storage of household guns, meaning the simple act of preventing unintentional access by keeping them in a locked gun vault or safe, decreases the risk of self-inflicted and unintentional firearm injuries among children and teens — up to 85 percent depending on the type of storage practice.

Simply put, safe gun storage laws are effective in preventing both unintentional injuries and suicide. **They save kids' lives.**

I urge you to vote yes on SB 554A. Thank you for your consideration. Please reach out to me or any of the pediatrician members of OPS if we can be a resource to you.

Respectfully,

Alanna Braun, MD, FAAP

ⁱ Azrael, D., Cohen, J., Salhi, C. & Miller, M. (2018). Firearm storage in gun-owning households with children: Results of a 2015 national survey. *Journal of Urban Health*, 95(3), 295-304. Doi: 10.1007/s11524-018-0261-7

ⁱⁱ Baxley, F. & Miller, M. (2006). Parental misperceptions about children and firearms. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, 160(5), 542-547. Doi: 10.1001/archpedi.160.5.542

ⁱⁱⁱ Oregon Health Authority. (2018). *Firearm Safety*. Retrieved from <https://www.oregon.gov>

^{iv} Oregon Health Authority. (2019). Injury deaths and rates, by manner, sex and age. Retrieved from https://visual-data.dhsoha.state.or.us/t/OHA/views/Oregondeathsfromexternalinjuries/DemogDash?:showAppBanner=false&:display_count=n&:showVizHome=n&:origin=viz_share_link&:isGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&:embed=y

^v Oregon Health Authority. (2019). Injury deaths and rates, by manner, sex and age. Retrieved from https://visual-data.dhsoha.state.or.us/t/OHA/views/Oregondeathsfromexternalinjuries/DemogDash?:showAppBanner=false&:display_count=n&:showVizHome=n&:origin=viz_share_link&:isGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&:embed=y

^{vi} Oregon Health Authority. (n.d.). *Suicide Prevention*. Retrieved from [oregon.gov](https://www.oregon.gov)

^{vii} Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2019). *WISQARS Fatal Injury Reports, Ages 10-24, Percent Change: 2009 to 2018*. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, CDC.

^{viii} Everytown Research and Policy. (2020). *The Rise of Firearm Suicide Among Young Americans*. Retrieved from [everytownresearch.org](https://www.everytownresearch.org)

^{ix} American Academy of Pediatrics. (n.d.). *Addressing Gun Violence: The State Level*. Retrieved from [aap.org](https://www.aap.org)

^x Giffords Law Center. (2020). *Safe Storage*. Retrieved from [giffords.org](https://www.giffords.org)

^{xi} World Health Organization. (2016). *INSPIRE: Seven strategies for ending violence against children*. Retrieved from [who.int](https://www.who.int)

^{xii} Hamilton, E., Miller, C. Cox, C., Lally, K. & Austin, M. (2018). Variability of child access prevention laws and pediatric firearm injuries. *Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery*, 84(4), 613-619. Doi: 10.1097/TA.0000000000001786



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- ^{xiii} Monuteaux, M., Azrael, D. & Miller, M. (2019). Association of increased safe household firearm storage with firearm suicide and unintentional death among US youths. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 173(7), 657-662. Doi: 10.1001/jamapediatrics.2019.1078
- ^{xiv} Rowhani-Rahbar, A., Simonetti, J. & Rivara, F. (2016). Effectiveness of interventions to promote safe firearm storage. *Epidemiologic Reviews*, 38, 111-124. Doi: 10.1093/epirev/mxv006
- ^{xv} Webster, D., Vernick, J., Zeoli, A. & Manganello, J. (2004). Association between youth-focused firearm laws and youth suicides. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 292(5), 594-601. Doi: 10.1001/jama.292.5.594
- ^{xvi} Cummings, P. & Rivara, F. (1997). State gun safe storage laws and child mortality due to firearms. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 278(13), 1084-1086 Doi: 10.1001/jama.1997.03550130058037
- ^{xvii} RAND Corporation. (2020). *The effects of child-access prevention laws*. Retrieved from rand.org
- ^{xviii} Giffords Law Center. (2020). *Safe Storage in Oregon*. Retrieved from giffords.org
- ^{xix} Oregon Health Authority. (n.d.). *Public Health's Role: Oregon Firearm Legislation*. Retrieved from oregon.gov/oha