



Oregon Pediatric Society

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

DATE: April 22, 2021

TO: Chair Smith Warner and members of the House Committee on Rules

FROM: James A. Bishara, MD, FAAP
Oregon Pediatric Society Member

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

The Oregon Pediatric Society (OPS) is the state chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Our membership is committed to improving and protecting the health and well-being of all children in Oregon, as well as those who care for them. For the record, my name is Dr. James A. Bishara. I am a Pediatric Cardiologist at OHSU Doernbecher Children's Hospital practicing in Salem. OPS strongly endorsed HB 2510, which would save children's lives and injury from accidental or intentional gun use, and we support SB 554 with amendments.

Firearm related deaths via accidental injury, homicide, or suicide are one of the leading causes of death in people under age 30. For years, suicide has been one of the top leading causes of death among Oregonians 10 to 24 years old, with guns being the most common mechanism. As a pediatric provider, I have had the unfortunate experience of caring for children who have tried to take their life. Their cries for help are far too common and affect far too many homes. When people choose firearms to attempt suicide, they are almost always successful. When they choose other methods, they usually survive. In my clinical practice, the contrast in deaths by suicide using firearms versus other methods is stark. I have had one patient survive an attempted suicide using a gun, but have lost count of the number who survived using other methods. When we consider these facts, and that Oregon ranks near the bottom in the US in measures of mental health of the population, SB 554's measures to ensure safe storage are vital.

Losing a loved one, especially a child, is extremely difficult for families. The often unbearable pain of loss is even worse for families when they lose a child to suicide, and it can last a lifetime.

Please vote to support SB 554. This bill will save lives and promote responsible gun ownership.