



Oregon Pediatric Society

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

DATE: April 30, 2021

TO: Senator Chuck Riley, Chair;
Senator Bill Hansell, Vice Chair;
and Members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Business

FROM: Tamara M. Grigsby, MD
Member of the Oregon Pediatric Society

SUBJECT: Support for HB 3379 – Prohibit Crib Bumpers

My name is Dr. Tamara Grigsby. I am a pediatrician teaching and practicing at OHSU Doernbecher Children's Hospital (DCH). I work directly with children and their families, from birth through adolescents; as well as training and mentoring residents in general pediatrics and child abuse pediatrics. I engage with children and their families in multiple care settings: the DCH outpatient pediatrics clinic, inpatient OHSU Mother Baby Unit, the DCH Emergency Room, the DCH Pediatric Intensive Care Unit, the DCH medical and surgical trauma wards, and finally at CARES Northwest Clinic at Legacy Emanuel Medical Center. I am a member of the Multnomah County Child Fatality Review Team and the State Child Fatality Review Team.

I am writing to you to express my heartfelt support of House Bill 3379, which “prohibits the manufacturing, retrofitting, selling, leasing, subletting or otherwise placing into stream of commerce, any crib bumper pads or crib equipped with crib bumper pads.”

Since 2011, sleep related infant death and prevention is, and has been, the number one issue identified by county child fatality review teams across the state of Oregon. In 2020, of the 91 Oregon child fatalities, 40 were infant deaths, and of those, 23 (57.5%) involved high-risk sleep practices.

Crib bumpers are one of many sleep practices marketed to parents-to-be despite overwhelming evidence that they do little to promote crib safety and instead, contribute to deadly clutter in many of our nation's cribs. Incidents of sudden unexpected infant deaths involving crib bumpers are caused by entrapment of the baby's head, arms or legs; choking; and near suffocation. Additional hazards associated with padded crib bumpers include: 1. limiting space on the crib mattress; 2. being difficult to install; 3. being used by caregivers with children older than the recommended age; and 4. promoting public opinion that crib bumpers and padded objects are suitable for cribs. It has been my professional experience that cribs are often cluttered with padded crib bumpers, diapers, blankets and toys, and consequently leave little room, if any, for a



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baby to sleep. As a result, parents resort to putting their infant to sleep next to them on the sectional sofa, or in their adult bed, or in a swing or other baby carrier. Tragically, some of these exhausted parents will awaken to find their baby not breathing and unresponsive.

The availability of crib bumpers to consumers feeds the narrative that cribs are not conducive to baby's sleep, and can only be made more comfortable, by installing crib bumpers. Parents are vulnerable to slick advertising with images of cherubic infants, soundly sleeping in cribs (on their back, of course) with padded bumpers and cozy infant bedding. Product placement and online marketing of crib bumpers sends mixed messages, often prompting savvy parent-consumers to ask themselves, "They wouldn't sell these products if they were unsafe, right?" as they simultaneously click on "Add to Cart."

The prevalence of mixed messages is no secret to primary care providers. As a sounding board for patients and caregivers, I am often asked to end debates in families when well-meaning friends and relatives gift or give hand-me-down cribs padded with baby bumpers. Crib bumpers are commonly endorsed as safe by previous generations of mothers and fathers and experienced friends. Conversely, my discussions with parents around the science of safe sleep, putting babies on their backs for every sleep, and warning against bumpers and soft bedding, is considered essential anticipatory guidance to infant caregivers by the American Academy of Pediatrics in order to prevent the tragedy of an infant dying because of an unsafe sleep practice.

With the Back to Sleep/Safe Sleep Campaign starting in 1994, the U.S. experienced dramatic reductions in sleep-related infant death, for a time. In the last 5 -7 years, child fatality review and related research demonstrates a perplexing reversal of those trends, with increasing sudden unexpected infant death, with notable disparities in the rates of between different racial and ethnic groups. Needless to say, the work of pediatricians practicing prevention, and ensuring health equity, is far from done.

HB 3379 banning crib bumpers is a timely and overdue next step in promoting truth in advertising and furthering infant safety at home and in child care settings. It is imperative for every infant caregiver to be provided evidence-based choices that will support their efforts to create and maintain environmental safety, and promote restorative sleep – for children, and parents. I urge you to vote yes on this bill. Thank you for your consideration.