



DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

DATE: March 7, 2023

TO: Senator Michael Dembrow
Chair, Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Kate Denison, Deputy Legislative Director
Oregon Department of Justice

SUBJECT: Senate Bill 551 – Safe Storage Education

Background

Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum and the Oregon Department of Justice (DOJ) support SB 551 as a practical public health measure to educate Oregon families about best practices for securely storing firearms and medications.

Firearms are the leading cause of death for children and teens in the United States. The vast majority (77 percent) of child and teen gun homicide deaths and unintentional shooting deaths and injuries occur in the home. More than 80 percent of child suicides involve a gun that belonged to a family member.¹

A comprehensive study by a Yale research team found that, between 1999 and 2016, 9,000 U.S. children died from poisonings from either prescription or illicit opioids. Nearly 40% of those children died at home.² Another body of research found that opioid pain relievers are stored unsafely in many households with children.³

In 2021, the Legislature took a crucial step forward in protecting Oregon's children from gun violence in the home by passing SB 554. The law now requires the owner or possessor of a firearm to safely secure the firearm with a trigger or cable lock, in a locked container, or in a gun room. Safe storage is a legal requirement, and SB 551 simply ensures that parents and guardians have the information they need to comply with it.

The bill will also provide families with important information about reducing youth access to prescription medications in the home, as well as the signs of drug overdose and how to respond. The measure does not impose any mandatory education or training on families – it simply provides

¹ <https://everytownresearch.org/issue/child-teen-safety/>

² <https://news.yale.edu/2018/12/28/child-deaths-opioids-nearly-tripled-recent-years-says-yale-study>

³ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28219969/>

them with access to critical, life-saving information to protect their children. Knowing or having access to this important and potentially lifesaving information will not harm anyone – but lacking it could.

We urge the committee's passage of this practical public health measure.

Contact:

Kate Denison, Deputy Legislative Director, 971-599-9851, kate.e.denison@doj.state.or.us

Kimberly McCullough, Legislative Director, 503-931-0418, kimberly.mccullough@doj.state.or.us