



March 5, 2023

Members of the Senate Committee on Education
Oregon State House of Representatives
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: SB 551 - SUPPORT

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Everytown for Gun Safety, and the Oregon chapters of Moms Demand Action and Students Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, I'm writing to express our strong support for SB 551, which will require Oregon school districts to publish information about secure storage of firearms and prescription drugs on their websites and distribute it to families twice a year.

Unauthorized access to firearms is a major source of gun violence in schools, as well as youth suicides, and an estimated 4.6 million American children live in households with at least one loaded, unlocked firearm.¹ This is why we advocated for years for Oregon to pass a law requiring firearms be securely stored when not in use, and we were proud to see the legislature pass such a law in 2021.

As it relates to school safety, evidence suggests that most school shooters do not purchase their firearms legally or illegally. Rather, these school shooters—roughly 75 percent—obtained the gun(s) from their home or the homes of relatives or friends.² For instance, in Santa Fe, TX in 2018, a student walked into Santa Fe High School and shot and killed 10 students and staff members and injured 13 others. He had taken the firearms he used in the shooting from his father who had failed to store them securely.

Access to unsecured firearms contributes to other forms of gun violence among children and teens. Every year, nearly 350 children under the age of 18 unintentionally shoot themselves or someone else. That's roughly one unintentional shooting per day, and nearly 70 percent of these incidents take place inside a home. Another 1,200 children and teens die by gun suicide each year, most often using guns belonging to a family member.³ In Oregon, firearms are the

¹ <https://everytownresearch.org/solution/responsible-gun-storage/>

² <https://everytownresearch.org/report/how-to-stop-shootings-and-gun-violence-in-schools/>

³ <https://everytownresearch.org/issue/child-teen-safety>

second-leading cause of death among children and teens, and 60% of those deaths are suicides – nearly twice the national average.⁴

Secure firearm storage can help prevent school gun violence and gun violence among children and teens. One study found that households that locked both firearms and ammunition were associated with a 78 percent lower risk of self-inflicted firearm injuries and an 85 percent lower risk of unintentional firearm injuries among children, compared to those that locked neither. Another study estimated that if half of households with children that contain at least one unlocked gun switched to locking all their guns, one-third of youth gun suicides and unintentional deaths could be prevented, saving an estimated 251 lives in a single year. These lives saved would make up one-third of all preventable youth deaths from firearm suicide and unintentional shootings that year.⁵

Across the country, lawmakers, school board members, and other local leaders are working together to implement public awareness campaigns—such as Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America’s Be SMART program—that encourage secure gun storage practices and highlight the public safety risks of unsecured guns. In Oregon, many school districts, including Lake Oswego and Bend-La Pine, have passed resolutions to require that information be sent home with students to educate parents on their responsibility under existing state and local laws that require gun owners to securely store any firearms they own. Currently, more than 8.6 million students nationally live in a district that sends home information about secure storage.

SB 551 is a simple yet effective step to inform all parents and to protect our students. We urge you to pass this bill.

Sincerely,



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⁴ <https://everystat.org/#Oregon>

⁵ <https://everytownresearch.org/solution/responsible-gun-storage/>