



Oregon Pediatric Society

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

April 22, 2021

Testimony in Support of SB 544-A
House Committee on Rules

Dear Chair Smith Warner, Vice-Chairs Drazan and Holvey, and Committee members,

I am a pediatrician at Doernbecher Children's Hospital and a member of the Oregon Pediatric Society, the state chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 544A.

Early in my career, I cared for a 4-year-old who accidentally shot himself in the head with a gun that his grandfather kept for self-protection. Another of my patients was a teenaged boy shot and killed with a stolen gun used by another teenager. Many of my pediatrician colleagues have cared for children or teenagers who have died by suicide using a gun. Some of these deaths may have been prevented if gun owners were required to store their guns safely.

In 2018, 40 Oregon children died by firearms, most by suicide, and the remainder of deaths unintentional or by homicide. Suicide is a leading cause of death among Oregon youth aged 10 to 24, and about half of these suicides were with a firearm. We know that Oregon has one of the highest youth suicide rates in the United States. We also know that guns used in youth suicide usually belong to a parent. We must take this opportunity to do something about it.

SB 554, which includes the provisions from House Bill 2510, requires that gun owners store their guns safely. States that have passed laws to require safe gun storage have seen decreases in youth suicides and accidental firearm deaths. A law that requires adults to be responsible for the safety of their guns is common sense. A law that requires adults to be responsible for the safety of their guns is a law that will save lives.

I urge you to vote yes on SB 554-A. Thank you for your consideration. I am willing to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa Weddle".

Melissa Weddle, MD, MPH, FAAP