

March 1, 2023

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

RE: SENATE BILL 551 - SUPPORT

Dear Chair Dembrow and Honorable Members of the Committee:

My name is Debbie Lindgren and I am a volunteer with Moms Demand Action, a retired educator and a lifetime Oregonian. I am writing to express my support for SB 551, which would require every school district to publish and distribute information about the secure storage of firearms and medications. Everyone, from parents to community members, wants to keep children and teens safe. The importance of secure gun storage is just another step the Oregon Legislature can take to help protect Oregon families and communities.

Children and teens are curious. They could find and handle an unsecured gun, even if they've been told not to. When guns aren't properly stored, tragedy can strike—whether it's a child finding a firearm and injuring or killing themselves (intentionally or unintentionally), or someone stealing it and using it to commit a crime like the Clackamas Town Center shooting in 2012.¹

Adults need to make sure all guns are stored securely both at home and in vehicles. With an estimated 4.6 million American children living in households with at least one loaded, unlocked firearm, the need for this bill is great. According to *Everytown for Gun Safety*, best practice is for the firearm to be stored unloaded, locked, and if possible, kept separate from ammunition when not in use so children and teens do not have easy access to firearms.² There are numerous secure gun storage options that are easy to use and effective at preventing unauthorized access. Furthermore, with the many varieties of gun storage technology, there are affordable options that will fit the gun owners needs including lockboxes, gun safes to devices with biometric authentication. If half of households with children that contain at least one unlocked gun switched to locking all of their guns, one-third of youth gun suicides and unintentional deaths could be prevented, saving an estimated 251 lives in a single year.³ This bill does not impede on the Second Amendment. An adult's access to their firearms is not taken away.

Gun violence and suicide are both public health crises. Oregon is experiencing a gun suicide rate above the national norm; approximately 79% of gun deaths in Oregon are suicides compared to 57% of all gun

¹ https://www.oregonlive.com/clackamascounty/2012/12/clackamas_town_center_shooting_61.html

² <https://www.everytown.org/solutions/responsible-gun-storage/>

³ Michael C. Monuteaux et al., "Association of Increased Safe Household Firearm Storage with Firearm Suicide and Unintentional Death Among US Youths," *JAMA Pediatrics* 173, no. 7 (2019): 657–62.

deaths in the U.S. Everytown tracks gun suicides by U.S. Congressional district, and of the 11 districts with more than 100 gun suicides per year, two are in Oregon. These are largely rural districts with relatively small populations which makes the data even more striking.⁴ Increasing public awareness regarding secure gun storage via school districts would decrease the chance of children and teens having easy access to a firearm.

It is for these reasons that I strongly support SB 551, and urge you to pass this bill.

Best,

Debbie Lindgren

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⁴ <https://everystat.org>