



To: Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and Members of the Senate Education Committee

From: Andrew Felcher, MD, Joel R. Burnett, MD, and Jenny Silberger, MD on Behalf of the Oregon Chapter of American College of Physicians

Date: March 6, 2023

Re: In Support of SB 551

The Oregon Chapter of American College of Physicians represents more than 1,600 medical students, residents/fellow-in-trainings, and practicing internal medicine physicians in Oregon. Internal medicine physicians are specialists in the care of medical patients both in the office and the hospital and apply their expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness. On behalf of our organization, we write in **strong support of SB 551**.

Firearms-related injuries and deaths are a major public health crisis. In 2020, the most recent year for which CDC data is available, 592 Oregonians died from firearms-related injuries.¹ For perspective, in 2020 more Oregonians died from firearms than from influenza pneumonia.² Figures from the Oregon Health Authority indicate that 2021 was even worse: 670 deaths in Oregon were associated with firearms, and 17 deaths involved children.³ These trends reflect national trends. For example, in 2020, for the first time ever, firearms became the leading cause of death among children and, in the same year, drug overdoses and poisonings rose sharply to become the 3rd leading cause of death among children.⁴ These deaths represent an avoidable public health crisis, which you have the power to mitigate in Oregon through passage of SB 551.

Secure firearm storage is an effective, evidence-based strategy for reducing firearm injuries and deaths. Numerous studies indicate secure storage laws and practices decrease both pediatric suicide rates and accidental firearm deaths.^{5,6,7,8,9} Because of their effectiveness, the Oregon Chapter of American College of Physicians and our parent organization, the American College of Physicians, strongly support secure firearm storage laws as outlined in a 2018 position paper in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, "Reducing Firearm Injuries and Deaths in the United States: A Position Paper from the American College of Physicians."¹⁰

With these facts in mind, the Oregon Chapter of American College of Physicians supports legislative measures to reduce barriers to secure storage. Promoting education to families of school children in Oregon, as would be required by SB 551, is a common-sense approach to reducing barriers to secure firearm storage.

In sum, secure firearm storage is a simple and effective strategy for decreasing firearm injuries and deaths. Let us reduce barriers to the use of secure storage practices by increasing education about secure gun storage in our schools. In the interest of Oregon's public health, we strongly urge you to vote yes on SB 551. Thank you for your consideration, and please don't hesitate to contact us for additional information or support.

Sincerely,

Andrew Felcher, MD, FACP Member, Health & Public Policy Committee of the Oregon Chapter of American College of Physicians

Joel Burnett, MD, Chair, Health & Public Policy Committee of the Oregon Chapter of American College of Physicians

Jenny Silberger, MD, FACP, Governor of the Oregon Chapter of American College of Physicians

¹ https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/firearm_mortality/firearm.htm

² https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/flu_pneumonia_mortality/flu_pneumonia.htm

³ Oregon Health Authority. (2021). Injury deaths and rates, by manner, sex and age. Retrieved from https://visual-data.dhsoha.state.or.us/t/OHA/views/Oregondeathsfromexternalinjuries/DemogDash?:showAppBanner=false&:display_count=n&:showVizHome=n&:origin=viz_share_link&:isGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&:embed=y

⁴ Goldstick JE, Cunningham RM, Carter PM. Current Causes of Death in Children and Adolescents in the United States. *N Engl J Med*. 2022 May 19;386(20):1955-1956. doi: 10.1056/NEJMc2201761. Epub 2022 Apr 20. PMID: 35443104.

⁵ Hamilton, E., Miller, C. Cox, C., Lally, K. & Austin, M. (2018). Variability of child access prevention laws and pediatric firearm injuries. *Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery*, 84(4), 613-619. Doi: 10.1097/TA.0000000000001786

⁶ Monuteaux, M., Azrael, D. & Miller, M. (2019). Association of increased safe household firearm storage with firearm suicide and unintentional death among US youths. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 173(7), 657-662. Doi: 10.1001/jamapediatrics.2019.1078

⁷ Rowhani-Rahbar, A., Simonetti, J. & Rivara, F. (2016). Effectiveness of interventions to promote safe firearm storage. *Epidemiologic Reviews*, 38, 111-124. Doi: 10.1093/epirev/mxv006

⁸ Cummings, P. & Rivara, F. (1997). State gun safe storage laws and child mortality due to firearms. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 278(13), 1084-1086 Doi: 10.1001/jama.1997.03550130058037

⁹ Webster, D., Vernick, J., Zeoli, A. & Manganello, J. (2004). Association between youth-focused firearm laws and youth suicides. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 292(5), 594-601. Doi: 10.1001/jama.292.5.594

¹⁰ Butkus R, Doherty R, Bornstein SS; Health and Public Policy Committee of the American College of Physicians. Reducing Firearm Injuries and Deaths in the United States: A Position Paper From the American College of Physicians. *Ann Intern Med*. 2018 Nov 20;169(10):704-707. doi: 10.7326/M18-1530. Epub 2018 Oct 30. PMID: 30383132. https://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M18-1530?_ga=2.83151638.1282702833.1615352955-242887235.1613946666