

Submitter: Luke Gunnarson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB551

Public schools continue to act as a branch of outreach for public health and education. As an educator, I am thankful that schools take an active role in requiring vaccination, following immunization schedules –From DTap to Polio to Measles. This is not government over-reach but a natural extension of working for the public good, because in a public health model what affects individual students, also affects the whole: the health of students' classrooms and community being free from disease. In SB 551 we need a similar approach for the health of our school communities. Communication elicits participation in the safety of the whole. Schools can act to communicate safe gun storage so that parents are more aware of teens and elementary kids accessing their guns.

While some gun owners or lobbies may argue that this is propaganda or overreach, or too costly, consider the gains of this bill. ** It's clear that access is a huge problem; According to the CDC 1,800 kids die from gun violence each year. 4.6 million kids live in a home with a loaded and unsecured firearm. $\frac{3}{4}$ of school shooters acquire their guns from the home of a parent or close relative. These are unacceptable health and safety statistics, and we should be ashamed by allowing this to continue on our watch, in our era, in our towns.

As an educator, It is my firm belief that educational info, presented in the right way, and a bipartisan effort will lead to more careful actions on the part of gun-owning parents. I also know this bottom line: Parents care about kids' safety. But, knowing many parents, and being a parent myself, a lot of us are BUSY, and not always aware of the consequences of our inaction until its too late. We have had too many youth suicides by gun in my area. Schools can and should inform parents of data and concrete actions for gun storage. It's not politics; it is an admission of the fact that so many of us have guns. This need for education hasn't been done in the past because frankly there was WAY LESS gun violence when I was a kid 30-years ago. From classrooms to legislative courtrooms, one key standard is RELEVANCE: We MUST react to our evolving needs of our communities. And this type of health & safety communication-- SB 551--meets the relevance and community health need standard, it elicits participation in the safety of the whole, and it is the right thing to do.

Thank you in advance,