



# Oregon Pediatric Society

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

DATE: March 27, 2025

TO: Chair Prozanski, and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Andrea Bateman, MD  
Board Member of the Oregon Pediatric Society

SUBJECT: Support for SB 243: Preventing Gun Violence

My name is Dr. Andrea Bateman. I am a pediatrician, a board member of the Oregon Pediatric Society, and a parent. I provide care to a predominantly adolescent population at a school-based health center in a Bend-area high school. I am writing in strong support of SB 243.

As a pediatrician, I witness firsthand the devastating impact of gun violence on children and teenagers—not just in physical injuries but in the lasting emotional trauma it inflicts on young people, families, and entire communities. Firearms are now the leading cause of death among children and teens in the U.S., surpassing car accidents and drug overdoses. This is a public health crisis that demands urgent attention.

You have heard stories of how gun violence impacts Oregonians, but I want to share with you an aspect of gun violence you may not have considered. A significant number of my patients are youth in the juvenile justice system, in OYA custody at residential programs in Central Oregon. These are not bad kids who set out to commit crimes out of the blue. As I listen to their stories, I realize that many of them have been profoundly impacted by gun violence. They have lost loved ones to firearm homicide and suicide and live in communities where gang life and gun carrying is the norm. Some of them have been shot themselves. These experiences are deeply traumatic – particularly to a child! - and lead to PTSD, depression, anxiety and substance use. For many, gun-related trauma has pushed them further into cycles of violence.

When young people experience gun violence and feel unsafe, they are more likely to carry weapons for self-defense, engage in retaliatory violence, or become involved in illegal activities that seem to offer security or an escape. Their stories make it clear: stronger gun safety laws are essential to breaking cycles of violence, protecting vulnerable youth, and reducing adolescent crime.

Beyond homicides and unintentional shootings, easy access to firearms plays a significant role in youth suicide. According to the Youth Behavioral Risk Survey, one in five teenagers has seriously considered suicide in the past year—a troubling statistic that underscores the intersection of mental health and gun safety. Many of the teens I see in



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my clinic struggle with anxiety and depression, and too many have considered ending their lives. When a gun is present in the home, the risk of suicide rises dramatically—especially among adolescents, who often act impulsively in moments of crisis. I have seen the devastating aftermath of firearm suicides, and I know how preventable these tragedies are.

The policies in SB 243 – raising the minimum age for firearm purchases, banning rapid-fire devices, and implementing waiting periods - are proven measures that help prevent impulsive violence, reduce suicides, and keep guns out of the hands of those who pose a danger to themselves or others.

As a doctor, I am committed to protecting the health and well-being of young people. As a parent, I want my children—and all children in Oregon—to grow up in a community where they feel safe. I urge you to pass SB 243 to help prevent further tragedies. Thank you for your consideration.