



Oregon Public Health Association

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www.OregonPublicHealth.org

March 12, 2021

Chair Prusak, Vice-Chairs Hayden and Salinas, Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Public Health Association, I am writing today to urge you to pass House Bill 2510. Oregon Public Health Association has over 560 members, which includes more than 20 organizations, in nearly every county in the state. We are public health professionals representing all components of our public health system: doctors, nurses, dentists, researchers, professors, students, community leaders, governmental public health professionals, and citizens who are committed to improving the health of every Oregonian.

HB 2510 is common sense gun safety legislation that will help address a growing public health crisis: firearm deaths. Setting a statewide standard requiring that firearms be safely secured when not in use will help reduce gun violence and make our communities safer.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 58,000 Oregon children live in homes with loaded guns—roughly half (26,500) of which are not stored in a locked container or with a trigger lock.¹ Firearm-related injuries are one of the leading causes of death for children and adolescents nationally, including gun suicides and unintentional discharge. And this has only gotten worse during the COVID-19 pandemic: unintentional shooting deaths by children rose nationally over 30% from March to May 2020.² Unsecured guns in the home pose a major risk to children; passing HB 2510 and requiring safe storage of guns will help prevent unintentional gun deaths of minors and save lives.

Over the past five years,³ Oregon's firearm suicide rate has averaged 42% higher than the national average, while our youth⁴ firearm suicide rate averages 43% higher than the national average.^{5,6,7} One

¹ Okoro C, et al. Prevalence of household firearms and firearm-storage practices in the 50 states and the District of Columbia: findings from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2002. *Pediatrics*, 116, e370-e376.

² Everytown For Gun Safety. (2020). Gun violence and COVID-19. Retrieved 11 March 2021 from <https://everytownresearch.org/report/gun-violence-and-covid-19-colliding-public-health-crises/>.

³ The past five years in which state and national mortality is available, and was analyzed, is 2015-2019.

⁴ Youth defined as persons aged 0-19 years.

⁵ State mortality data taken from the Oregon Health Authority Vital Statistics Annual Reports (volume 2): 2015-2017 Table 6-34, 2018 Table 11, 2019 from data dashboard. See <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/BIRTHDEATHCERTIFICATES/VITALSTATISTICS/ANNUALREPORTS/VOLUME2/Pages/index.aspx> for more information.

⁶ State population data taken from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey. See <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=oregon&tid=ACSST1Y2019.S0101&hidePreview=false> for more information.

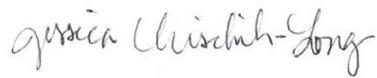
⁷ National mortality data taken from CDC WISQARS database. See <https://wisqars-viz.cdc.gov:8006/explore-data/home> for more information.

hundred Oregon children under the age of 18 died by firearm suicide between 2010 and 2019.³ During the COVID-19 pandemic, gun sales have surged in Oregon and nationally, and 56% of people who purchased a gun during the pandemic say they've considered suicide in the past year.⁸ Preventing or delaying access to a firearm saves lives; once that moment of crisis ends, 90 percent of people do not attempt suicide again.⁹ This is particularly the case for children who cannot purchase a gun on their own.

Oregon currently has no requirements for safely storing guns, and without HB 2510, Oregonians are at risk. The evidence is clear: passing HB 2510 will help keep firearms out of the hands of children, and away from people who may harm themselves or others. The Oregon Public Health Association urges you to vote YES on House Bill 2510.

Thank you.

On behalf of our membership,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jessica Nischik-Long".

Jessica Nischik-Long, MPH
Executive Director

⁸ See especially Table 1 in: Anestis M, et al. Suicidal ideation among individuals who have purchased firearms during COVID-19. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 60, 311-317.

⁹ Owens D, Horrocks J, and House A. Fatal and non-fatal repetition of self-harm: systematic review. *British Journal of Psychiatry*. 2002;181:193-199.