

Alaska Chapter

Incorporated in Alaska

American Academy of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®

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The Honorable Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, Chair
The Honorable Matt Claman, Vice-Chair
House State Affairs Committee
State Capitol Room 411
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Re: House Bill 203—Misconduct Involving Weapons

Dear Representatives Kreiss-Tomkins and Claman & Members of the House State Affairs Committee:

The American Academy of Pediatrics, Alaska Chapter supports the passage of House Bill 203, the Alaska Secure Storage of Firearms Act. At present, gun violence (which includes gun suicides and unintentional shootings) is a public health crisis in the United States and in Alaska. As the state with the highest rate of gun deaths in the country and the highest rate of gun suicides among our young people, it is time to take proactive action.

The passage of HB 203 will provide protection for Alaska's children. In 2019, 48.9% of Alaskan high school students reported they could access a loaded firearm. In Alaska, firearms are the leading cause of death for children and teens. On average, 22 children and teens die by firearms every year with 61% being gun suicides. Each year nearly 350 children in the US gain access to a firearm and unintentionally shoot themselves or someone else. Alaska has the second highest rate of injuries and death resulting from unintentional shootings by children.

Requiring safe storage of firearms reduces the incidence of gun suicides, unintentional shootings and gun violence. We need to protect our pediatric population and HB203 is one way to do that. Currently, there is no requirement for safe gun storage in Alaska. The American Academy of Pediatrics support House Bill 203 that will require gun owner to securely store firearms in a locked container, with a gun lock, or by other means to render the firearm inaccessible or unable to be used by a person who is not the owner or an authorized person. Let's teach our children and teens about secure storage of firearms and help reduce the number of injuries and deaths caused by unsafe storage.

Sincerely,
Anna Ogena, MD, FAAP
Jody Butto, MD, FAAP
Kevin Kollins, MD, FAAP
Matthew Serna, MD, FAAP
Marna Schwartz, MD, FAAP