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Legislative Testimony – HB 2199
House Standing Committee on Federal and State Affairs

February 19, 2013

Chairman Siegfried and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share why Kansas Action for Children opposes the provision in House Bill 2199 that prohibits physicians from asking patients if they have firearms in their homes.

Kansas Action for Children is a not-for-profit child advocacy organization founded in 1979. For more than 30 years, KAC has worked with lawmakers on policy solutions that improve the lives of Kansas children and their families.

Child Deaths Involving Firearms in Kansas

Approximately one-third of families with children keep at least one gun in the home. From 2005-2010, 40% of the total 118 homicides of children in Kansas age 0-17 involved the use of a firearm. Screening for child and adolescent access to firearms is an essential component of injury prevention. The practices of keeping firearms locked, unloaded, and storing ammunition in a locked location separate from firearms may assist in reducing youth suicide and unintentional injury in homes with children and teenagers where guns are stored.

Pediatricians Provide Guidance to Prevent Accidents

Doctors are in a unique position to provide guidance to our families and children and protect them from any number of things. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) encourages physicians to ask patients if they own firearms in the name of protecting child safety. Asking parents with young children about the presence of guns is just one item in a safety checklist that includes questions about staircase gates, pool safety and the location of poison in the home. The purpose is to allow doctors to provide safety tips to parents in order to prevent accidents.

Sanctity of Patient-Physician Relationship

The provision in House Bill 2199 prohibiting physicians from asking patients about firearms stands to threaten the sanctity of the patient-physician relationship. Allowing physicians to raise any and all concerns they have with their patients will help ensure parents are educated on safety measures to keep guns out of harm's way and prevent accidental shootings.

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