



TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF HB 2059

January 27, 2021

Chairman and Members of the House Committee,

The Kansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (KAAP) represents more than 400 of the practicing pediatricians in the state. The KAAP has the fundamental goal that all children and adolescents in Kansas have the opportunity to grow safe and strong. It is with this goal in mind that we want to share our opposition to the proposed HB 2059 that would lower the age limit for provisional firearm license to 18 years old.

Firearms are a leading cause of death for children through homicide, suicide, and unintentional injury. Children in urban as well as rural areas are affected. As pediatricians, we are obligated to counsel parents about the dangers of allowing children and adolescents to have unrestricted access to guns inside and outside the home. These conversations are tailored to the needs of individual families and include information on methods of safe storage for those who wish to own firearms. Ensuring that children and adolescents cannot access a firearm without adequate supervision is a way to keep them safe and prevent tragedy.

While we respect the second amendment rights of the families under our care, pediatricians are particularly concerned about unintended consequences of HB 2059 on our adolescent population. Kansas is facing a youth suicide crisis, as suicide continues to be the second leading cause of death for Kansans in the 15 to 24-year age group. Additionally, the number of suicides by Kansans 18 years old and younger more than doubled in the decade between 2005 and 2015. Of the common methods for attempting suicide, firearms are the most lethal with a mortality rate of about 90%. Studies have shown that firearm availability plays a large role in increasing the risk of suicide among adolescents, especially if a loaded gun is kept in the home.

While the 18th birthday is often perceived as the day an individual becomes an adult, it is actually the beginning of a gradual transition. 18 to 21-year-old men and women are still adolescents in terms of their brain development. The AAP policy statement [Firearm-Related Injuries Affecting the Pediatric Population](#) states: "Adolescence is marked by a search for identity, independence, and autonomy. Accompanying characteristics may be curiosity, the strong influence of the peer group, rites of passage, belief in invincibility, impulsiveness, immaturity, mood swings, and substance abuse." Studies have shown that many suicide survivors contemplated their actions in a very brief window of time, and that states with waiting period laws have fewer firearm suicides than those without. Simply put, an 18-year-old high school student with unrestricted firearm access, including the ability to easily purchase a firearm without reasonable safeguards in place, may make a snap decision that results in devastating consequences.



Thank you for your time and consideration in opposing HB 2059 that will prevent adolescents from having unrestricted firearm access.

Respectfully submitted,

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Public Policy Committee Member