

Request for Appropriation for Statewide Safe Gun Storage Campaign February 11, 2022

PLEASE SUPPORT HB 4729 and HB 5086- Rep. Kathleen Willis

Purpose/Synopsis

Increasing public awareness of gun safety through safe gun storage is a key strategy to reducing gun injuries and death in Illinois. **Gun Violence Prevention advocates request the State of Illinois to invest \$3.5 million over two years to develop and implement a comprehensive statewide safe gun storage public awareness campaign.**

Background

Gun violence is a public health crisis with tremendous negative and lasting consequences for children, families, and communities in Illinois and across the country. A public health approach to injury and violence prevention calls for a multi-tiered strategy that focuses on prevention, effective responses when gun violence occurs, and recovery support for victims and survivors. Promoting positive messages about keeping children and communities safe through safe gun storage and other gun safety information is a key strategy to reducing gun injuries and death by homicide, suicide, and through unintentional causes.

Problem Statement

Guns are the leading cause of death of Illinois children ages 1-17 years old.¹ And 1,310 Illinoisans (all ages) die by gun violence every year.² Between 2015 and 2019, an average of 180 children and adolescents in Illinois and 3,231 children and adolescents across the country were killed by guns every year.³ For those admitted to the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit, only 10% have good performance status; the remainder suffer significant disability.⁴ The health burden falls particularly hard on African American youth, as Black children and youth in Illinois are 14 times as likely as their white peers to die by firearms.⁵

During the COVID-19 pandemic, gun violence and injury have grown. Firearm injuries in Chicago jumped from 2,598 in 2019 to over 4,000 in 2020.⁶ And 40% of suicides by Black Cook County residents were caused by a firearm, which is a 73% increase.⁷

According to the Center for Disease Control, in 2019, in Illinois there were 53 suicides involving firearms among children & young adults 10-24 years of age.⁸ In the past 5 years, there have been 274 suicides in this age range in Illinois.⁹

The ongoing toll of gun violence illustrates the urgency for the state to take additional steps to promote gun safety. While more research is needed to address the causes of and solutions to reducing gun violence, promoting safe storage and other gun safety behaviors can help to mitigate the likelihood of gun injuries and death. A recent survey of parents in Chicago found that a majority of Chicago parents (60%) fear their child could be harmed by a firearm when visiting someone else's home, yet only 1 in 5 Chicago parents ask about the presence of guns in home.¹⁰

In addition, the potential threat of gun theft of unsecured guns is an increasing concern that can be addressed by promoting safe gun storage practices.¹¹ Nationally, 4.6 million children and youth live in homes with unsecured guns, and over 380,000 guns are stolen each year.¹²

Outcomes/Impact

Illinois can lead other states in adopting a gun safety public awareness campaign modeled from other public health initiatives that have been proven to promote positive behavioral change to address persistent public health concerns. A hypothetical intervention model focused on firearm owners with children demonstrated that by increasing the safe storage of firearms by 50%, there would be a subsequent 32% reduction in youth firearm mortality from suicide and unintentional causes.¹³ Further, increasing safe storage can provide additional protections against gun theft.

The key markers of effective public awareness campaigns include:

- **Sustained messaging over time:** Multi-year campaigns can lead to long-term behavior change. For example, the negative health effects of smoking, awareness of motor-vehicle safety, and safe swimming education have all led to long-term behavioral changes in the public, new laws to encourage positive behaviors, and overall reductions in injury and death.¹⁴
- **Messages paired with information about enforcement and/or incentives:** Messages that educate the public on potential consequences related to a behavior, or to incentivize a desired change in behavior, can be more effective for promoting awareness. When combining campaigns with enforcement strategies, including messages designed to change behavior while advising on potential penalties for noncompliance, effect sizes can jump from 9% to 17% compliance.¹⁵ These similar effects can be seen in past campaigns focused on seat belts and child car seat usage, among others.
- **Focused messages:** Campaigns that address a particular population as opposed to generalized messages are more likely to promote the desired behavior. For example, positive results related to tobacco use among youth in the *Real Cost Campaign* prevented up to 587,000 youth from initiating smoking with an estimated savings of \$53 billion associated with the negative effects of smoking.¹⁶
- **Geographic and cultural considerations:** Campaigns that include separate strategies based on geographic considerations allow for more effective and relevant messaging, e.g., distinct messages for rural or urban communities. Partnerships with state and local government agencies, community-based organizations, and faith-based groups should be developed to aid in designing and delivering messages to the community.

Request

Although other states have adopted gun safety and safe storage campaigns, no states have rigorously evaluated their campaigns for changes in gun safety behaviors. We propose a comprehensive campaign over two years with the following strategies that adopt the key markers of an effective campaign:

Phase 1: Universal Messaging Strategy

Develop research-based, culturally appropriate messaging to bring awareness of gun safety, reducing access to lethal means, and encouraging safe storage. The campaign would include formats such as paid advertising on CTA trains, bus stops, billboards, digital/social media campaigns, radio, and other public education and outreach.

Phase 2: Gun Lock/Gun Safe Distribution Campaign and Gun Buy Back Programs

- Develop focused strategy to distribute gun locks and gun safes in areas most affected by gun violence (through community-based organizations)
- Pair gun lock distribution with brief counseling or education session which has been shown to significantly increase safe storage practices.¹⁷
- Develop education and training program on safe storage counseling and screening for healthcare professionals, including pediatric primary care and emergency room departments.
- Develop education and training on the Firearm Restraining Order for practitioners, law enforcement and the general public.
- Focus on suicide prevention, youth or young adult survivors of gun violence, and families at risk due to domestic violence.
- Incorporate gun buy back opportunities in partnership with law enforcement, community-based organizations, and other local stakeholders.

Phase 3: Evaluation

The proposed campaign will include a comprehensive evaluation to measure changes in gun safety behaviors and the overall impact and effectiveness of the campaign to promote safety.

Metrics to be measured, include:

- Changes in parent behaviors and perceptions
- Media campaign metrics and digital analytics
- Number of people reached through each strategy
- Number of gun locks/safes distributed
- Changes in intentional and unintentional firearm injury

Please support the passage of HB 4729 (substantive bill) and HB 5086 (appropriations bill).

Supporting Organizations

Advocate Aurora Health

Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago

Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence

BUILD, Inc.

Children's Advocates for Change

Coalition to Stop Gun Violence

Collaborative for Children's Health Policy

Cook County Health

Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence
Everytown
Giffords Law Center
ICAN4KIDS
Illinois Association for Infant Mental Health
Illinois Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics
The Illinois Chapter of Moms Demand Action
Illinois Health and Hospital Association
Lawrence Hall
Loyola Medicine
NAMI Chicago
Newtown Action Alliance
NorthShore -Edward- Elmhurst Health
Northwestern Medicine
One Aim Illinois
OSF HealthCare
Restoring Community LLC
Strengthening Chicago's Youth
The Illinois Chapter of Moms Demand Action
Thresholds
UChicago Medicine Comer Children's Hospital
UI Health
West Side United
YMCA Metropolitan Chicago
Youth Guidance

¹ Centers for Disease Control (CDC), WONDER Database, 2019.

² Giffords Law Center, The State of Gun Violence in Illinois, 2020.

³ Everytown for Gun Safety (Everytown), Gun Violence in Illinois.

⁴ Bagdure D, MPH1; Foster, Cortney B. DO1; Garber, Nan MD1; Holloway, Adrian MD1; Day, Jenni PhD, RN2; Lee, Jessica MD3; Soto-Campos, Gerardo PhD, MS4; Brundage, Nancy RN, BSN, MPH4; Bhutta, Adnan MBBS, FAAP, FCCM1; Graciano, Ana Lia MD, FAAP, FCCM1 Outcomes of Children With Firearm Injuries Admitted to the PICU in the United States*, Pediatric Critical Care Medicine: November 2021 - Volume 22 - Issue 11 - p 944-949.

⁵ Everytown.

⁶ Associated Press, Chicago ends 2020 with 769 homicides as gun violence surges, January 1, 2021.

⁷ Chicago Sun Times, More Suicides by Black Cook County residents in 2020 than in any year in over a decade, February 19, 2021.

⁸ CDC, 2019.

⁹ CDC, 2019.

¹⁰ Davis MM, Heffernan ME, Smith TL, Bendelow A, Bhatti PK, Menker C, Helmcamp L, Attridge M, Sheehan KM. Firearm safety in Chicago families, Voices of Child Health in Chicago Report. Vol 3, Number 6. July 2021. Available at luriechildrens.org/voices.

¹¹ Hemenway D, Azrael, D, and Miller M, Whose Guns are Stolen? The Epidemiology of Gun Theft Victims, Injury Epidemiology 4, no. 1 (2017).

¹² Azrael D, Cohen J, Salhi C, and Miller M, Firearm Storage in Gun-owning Households with Children: Results of a 2015 National Survey, Journal of Urban Health 95, no. 3 (2018): 295–304.

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- ¹³ Monuteaux MC, Azrael D, Miller M, Association of increased safe household firearm storage with firearm suicide and unintentional death among US youths JAMA Pediatr, 173 (2019), pp. 657-662.
- ¹⁴ Snyder L B, Hamilton M A. A meta-analysis of U.S. health campaign effects on behavior: emphasize enforcement, exposure, and new information, and beware the secular trend In: Hornik R C (ed). Public health communication: evidence for behavior change. Mahwah, NJ, USA: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. 2002.
- ¹⁵ Snyder LB, Hamilton MA, Mitchell EW, Kiwanuka-Tondo J, Fleming-Milici F, Proctor D. A meta-analysis of the effect of mediated health communication campaigns on behavior change in the United States. J Health Commun. 2004;9; and Zhao X. Health communication campaigns: A brief introduction and call for dialogue. Int J Nurs Sci. 2020 Apr 27.
- ¹⁶ Delahanty J, Ganz O, Bernat J, Trigger S, Smith A, Lavinghouze R, Rao, Awareness of “The Real Cost” Campaign Among US Middle and High School Students: National Youth Tobacco Survey, 2017, Public Health Reports, 2020.
- ¹⁷ Uspal NG, Strelitz B, Cappetto K, Tsogoo A, Jensen J, Rutman LE, Schloredt K, Bradford MC, Bennett E, Paris CA. Impact of a Firearm Safety Device Distribution Intervention on Storage Practices After an Emergent Mental Health Visit. Acad Pediatr. 2021 Sep-Oct;21(7):1209-1217.