

American Academy of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

Testimony of Deborah Hagler MD in favor of LD 1312 An Act Regarding Access To Firearms by Extremely Dangerous and Suicidal Individuals

Maine Chapter, AAP
30 Association Drive, Box 190
Manchester, ME 04351
Phone: 207-480-4185

Executive Committee

President

Stephen Meister, MD MHSA FAAP

Vice President

Deborah Hagler, MD FAAP

Treasurer

Christopher Motyl, DO FAAP

Immediate Past President

Janice Pelletier, MD FAAP

Board of Directors

Amy Belisle MD MBA FAAP
Laura Blaisdell, MD FAAP
Amy Buczkowski, MD
Melissa Burch, MD FAAP
Adrienne Carmack, MD FAAP
Gabriel Civiello MD FAAP
Anne Coates, MD FAAP
Dan Hale, MD FAAP
Emily Jacobs, DO
Jennifer Jewell MD MS FAAP
Stephanie Joy, MD, FAAP
Emily Keller, MD, FAAP
Michele Labotz, MD FAAP
Lawrence Losey MD FAAP
Valerie O'Hara, DO FAAP
Jennifer Paul, MBBS
Sydney Sewall MD MPH FAAP
Mary Tedesco-Schneck PhD NP FAAP
Andrea Tracy, MD FAAP
Genevieve Whiting, MD, FAAP
Brian Youth MD FAAP

Chapter Executive Director

Dee Kerry
dakerry@aap.net
office: 207-480-4185

www.maineaap.org

[MAAP Facebook Page](#)

Twitter: [@MaineAAP](#)

**Maine awarded 2015
Outstanding Small Chapter by
the national AAP**

AAP Headquarters
141 Northwest Point Blvd
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007-1098
Phone: 847-434-4000 Fax-8000
www.aap.org

Good morning Senator Carpenter and Representative Bailey and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Deborah Hagler. I reside in Harpswell. I have been a practicing pediatrician in Maine for 22 years. I attended Cornell Medical College; did my pediatrics training at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia am currently completing a Master of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University and Serve as the President Elect of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Of all high-income nations, the United States lags in many health indicators, however we are a leader in firearm deaths with approximately 80% of firearm deaths worldwide occurring in the United States. If you live in an urban area most of these deaths are homicides, and if you live in a rural area these deaths are suicides. In fact, suicide is the most common cause of firearm mortality over all in the United States.

Suicide is now the second leading cause of death for youth age 10-24, nationally and in Maine. Close to half of the youth suicides in Maine are from firearms. It is estimated that 82 % of firearms used in youth suicides come from family members. Several studies have validated that merely having a firearm in the home substantially increases the risk for suicide in the household. Indeed a recent analysis of suicide trends in youth reviewing state level gun ownership and national youth suicide trends found that for every 10% point increase in household gun ownership at the state level the youth suicide rate increased by 26.9%.

Many who attempt suicide are suffering from depression and the vast majority of those who attempt suicide will not die by suicide they will receive treatment and live full and product lives - unless the attempt is made with a firearm as these attempts are lethal close to 85% of the time. We know that restricting means reduces suicide. In the UK in 1960 close to 2500 died from suicide from inhalation of toxic coal gas produced by most household ovens. After changing domestic gas to a nontoxic form suicide rates in the UK dropped by 30%. In Israel limiting access of the defense force to their firearms on the weekends decreased the suicide rate amongst this population by 40%.

We know many intent on self-harm or violence often give warning signs to those around them and states that have ERPO have seen decreases in their suicide rates. When young people hit 18 and are struggling families can find themselves left out of important health care discussions because of healthcare privacy laws. They may be sidelined as they watch a loved one struggle with very adult issues for which theses newly minted "adults" lack insight about their depth of despair and their need for support. One tool we can give worried parents is the ability to restrict access to the most lethal means of self-harm available - firearms. We know public policy solutions restricting means decreases suicide. We owe it to our young people to give them every opportunity to reach a brighter tomorrow.

Anita Knopov, Rebecca J. Sherman, Julia R. Raifman, Elysia Larson, Michael B. Siegel, Household Gun Ownership and Youth Suicide Rates at the State Level, 2005–201 *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, Volume 56, Issue 3, 2019, Pages 335-342,

Dodson, N. 2016. Adolescent gun violence prevention: what we know, and what we can do to keep young people safe. *Current Op In Ped.* 28(4) 441-446.

Suicide in Maine- 2018 Update (A Data Brief Youth 10-24). Available at:
<https://www.maine.gov/suicide/docs/Youth-Data-Brief-2018.pdf>