



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF **HB 2251**

March 26, 2021

Chairman Barker and Members of the House Federal and State Affairs 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 testimony in favor of the proposed HB 2251 that would allow for a firearm to be removed from individuals deemed at risk of harming others based on orders of protection or conviction for domestic violence offense.

Domestic violence and gun violence are deeply interrelated, impacting millions of women, families, and communities across the U.S. The crisis of domestic violence is closely linked to widespread and growing use of guns by abusers; over half of women killed by an intimate partner are killed with a gun. Existing loopholes in federal and state law allow access to guns by abusive partners and stalkers, often with deadly results. The evidence is clear: Common-sense laws that keep guns out of the hands of abusive partners reduce gun violence and domestic violence. It is time for Kansas to protect the lives of women, children, and families with this legislation.

“Between 2015 and 2019, at least 157 people were killed in domestic violence homicides in Kansas. Access to a gun in a domestic violence situation makes it five times more likely a victim will be killed and nearly three out of every five domestic violence homicides in Kansas involved a firearm.” Guns further exacerbate the power and control dynamic used by abusers to inflict emotional abuse and exert intimidation over their victims. (Everytown Every Stat)

The effects of intimate partner violence (IPV) with guns extends beyond the intimate relationship— significantly affecting children who witness or live with it and the family members, coworkers, and law enforcement officers who respond to it. Children’s exposure to IPV gun violence is permanently damaging, if not deadly. For children under age 13 who are victims of gun homicide, nearly one-third are connected to intimate partner or family violence.<sup>1</sup> The trauma for children who survive and witness the death of their parent from IPV suffer life-altering consequences, including severe post-traumatic stress disorder, behavioral problems, disrupted school performance, suicidal thoughts, and an adulthood of disease related to trauma.<sup>2-4</sup>

Research shows that the following federal and state policies and practices that disrupt abusers’ access to guns can and has saved lives. (Everytown Executive Summary)

1. Strengthening state laws prohibiting domestic abusers from possessing guns and requiring abusers to relinquish guns they already have. This includes closing the “boyfriend loophole.”

2. Focusing on implementation and enforcement of existing state firearm relinquishment laws by state and local courts and law enforcement agencies.
3. Strengthening the background check system to keep guns out of dangerous hands by closing deadly loopholes and addressing deficiencies including private sales online and gun shows.
4. Requiring dealers to notify state or local law enforcement when a domestic abuser or convicted stalker attempts to buy a gun and fails a background check. The attempted purchase is a crime.
5. Funding comprehensive research on the nexus of guns and intimate partner violence.

Research shows that when states broadened their firearm prohibition laws beyond federal law to cover abusive dating partners, the states experienced a 16 percent reduction in intimate partner firearm homicide rates.<sup>5</sup>

This bill can play a valuable role in preventing deaths and injuries due to firearms in Kansas. While we respect the second amendment rights of the families under our care, pediatricians are particularly concerned about firearms remaining in homes where danger of harm has been identified due to domestic violence.

Thank you for your time and consideration in passing **HB 2251** that allow firearms to be removed from homes of individuals deemed at risk of harming those within their household.

Respectfully submitted,

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**References:**

- Everytown Every Stat. <https://maps.everytownresearch.org/everystat#Kansas>. Updated January 2021.
- Everytown For Gun Safety. Executive Summary Report. [Guns and Violence Against Women](#). October 17, 2019.
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  2. Hardesty JL, Campbell JC, McFarlane JM, Lewandowski LA. How children and their caregivers adjust after intimate partner femicide. *Journal of Family Issues*. 2008;29(1):100-124.
  3. Alisic E, Krishna RN, Groot A, Frederick JW. Children's mental health and well-being after parental intimate partner homicide: a systematic review. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*. 2015;18(4):328- 345.
  4. Lysell H, Dahlin M, Långström N, Lichtenstein P, Runeson B. Killing the mother of one's child: psychiatric risk factors among male perpetrators and offspring health consequences. *Journal of Clin Psychiatry*. 2016;77(3):342-347.
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