

Minnesota Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee
Chair: Senator Ron Latz

SF 4312

Friday March 22, 2024 at 9:00 AM
1200 Minnesota Senate Building

IN SUPPORT

Dear Chair Latz and members of the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee,

As a family physician, lifelong Minnesotan, and concerned aunt of 4 school-aged children, I am testifying in strong support of Senate File 4312, strengthening requirements for secure storage of firearms and ammunition.

When my nephew was in second grade, his classmate brought a parent's loaded gun to school. Fortunately there was a trigger lock on it and no one was hurt or killed. Realizing how easily that day could have ended in tragedy otherwise is still upsetting for my family, and it underscores the extreme importance of secure storage of firearms.

Gun violence is a public health crisis. Firearms are the number one killer of children and teens in our country.¹ Secure firearm storage plays a vital role in decreasing gun violence. Storing firearms securely protects children and adults from unintentional shootings, lowers the risk of firearm suicide by putting time and space between a person with suicidal thoughts and access to lethal means, and decreases the risk of a firearm being stolen from its owner's home or vehicle and later used in a violent crime.

Experts from the National Shooting Sports Foundation and the American Academies of Pediatrics and Family Physicians recommend storing firearms unloaded, locked, and separate from ammunition. While millions of responsible firearm owners follow these safe storage practices, we know that unfortunately over half do not.² A 2019 study in *JAMA Pediatrics* estimated that if half of households with children that contain at least one unlocked gun switched to locking all their guns, one-third of youth gun suicides and unintentional deaths could be prevented, saving an estimated 251 lives in a single year.³

SF 4312 encourages established best practices for secure firearm storage and increases accountability for those who choose otherwise, thereby putting the safety of Minnesotans and their communities at risk. SF 4312 will literally save lives. Please vote yes on SF 4312.

Thank you for your work to make our state a safe place to live and raise the next generation of Minnesotans.

Emily Benzie, MD
St. Paul, MN

¹ Davis, A., Kim, R., & Crifasi, C. K. (2023). A Year in Review: 2021 Gun Deaths in the U.S. Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

² Crifasi CK, Douchette ML, McGinty EE, Webster DW, Barry CL. Storage Practices of US gun owners in 2016. *American Journal of Public Health*. 2018;108(4):532-537.

³ Monuteaux, M., Azrael, D. & Miller M. (2019) Association of Increased Safe Household Firearm Storage with Firearm Suicide and Unintentional Death Among US Youths. *JAMA Pediatr*. 2019;173(7):657-662. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2019.1078