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July 8, 2021

The Honorable Lauren Underwood
U.S. House of Representatives
1130 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Underwood:

On behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), a non-profit professional organization of 67,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical sub-specialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults, I am writing to share our endorsement of the *Child Suicide Prevention and Lethal Means Safety Act*. This bill would help keep children safer by supporting health care professionals' efforts to identify and support youth who might be at risk for self-harm.

Firearm-related injuries are a pervasive public health threat that significantly impacts children. Strong evidence suggests that the presence of firearms in the home increases the risk of suicide among adolescents. Adolescents are at a relatively high risk of attempting suicide as a consequence of their often impulsive behavior. Choosing a highly lethal method such as a firearm to attempt suicide leads to higher suicide fatality rates overall, in part because most survivors of serious suicide attempts do not die of renewed attempts. easy access to firearms contributes to an increased risk of suicide among youth this age. Pediatricians counsel the parents of adolescents to remove guns from the home or restrict access to them. Safely storing firearms in secure environments such as gun safes reduces the risk of serious injury and death, including adolescent suicide.

The *Child Suicide Prevention and Lethal Means Safety Act* would provide grants to states or institutions of higher education to fund programs to train health care providers for the purpose of reducing child and adolescent suicide rates. These programs can include training or educating providers to better identify individuals at high risk, to communicate effectively with patients about firearm safety, or to support other suicide prevention best practices. Critically, the bill also provides funding for programs to have health care providers distribute firearm locks at no cost to households with children to promote firearm safe storage and reduce injury risk. By providing important lethal means safety and suicide prevention information to health care providers, this bill would help keep children safer.

Thank you again for your leadership in working to protect our nation's children from firearm-related injury and death. If the AAP can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Zach Laris in our Washington, D.C. office at 202/347-8600 or zlaris@aap.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Lee Savio Beers".

Lee Savio Beers, MD, FAAP
President
LSB/zml