

Dear Members of the Federal and State Affairs Committee -

Today I am here to advocate for the safety of children and teens in our state. As an educator, I oppose the passage of HB 2304, which would make the Eddie Eagle program the standardized curriculum for firearm safety in grades K-8.

In Kansas, 45 children and teens are killed by firearms each year. This makes gun violence the leading cause of death for our young citizens ages 0-18, more than car accidents, or any disease. These alarming statistics mean we should do everything in our power to reduce these numbers. The Eddie Eagle program has been shown to be ineffective at deterring children from handling guns that they encounter unexpectedly. The American Academy of Pediatrics opposes it for this reason.

The Eddie Eagle program teaches children that they should not touch any firearm they encounter. The problem with this philosophy is that it does not take into account children's natural curiosity when adults are not around. Parents and guardians who believe their child will be safe from touching or using a gun they encounter are given a false sense of security when in reality, you cannot educate the curiosity out of a child. The responsibility to prevent gun violence should not rest on the judgment of mere children but instead must rest on the gun owner's safe storage procedures.

We believe that local school boards should decide which materials to use to implement a gun-safety curriculum. There are other programs that school districts can choose from and for that reason, this bill was opposed by the Kansas State Board of Education and the Kansas National Education Association (KNEA) when it was proposed in the Senate.

No parent should have to go through the grief of losing their child to unintentional gun violence; safe storage procedures will lower the chance of this happening, not implementing the Eddie Eagle program.

I urge you to oppose HB 2304.