

Wednesday, February 8 2023

SB116 Standardizing firearm safety education programs in school districts.

Proponent

Oral in-person testimony

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These days, as a nation, we are struggling to find common ground. Our children's safety is the common ground we have been searching for. Every single one of us in this room, and everyone watching from home, agrees that teaching our children how to be safe is paramount.

My name is Representative Rebecca Schmoe. Before I was elected by my district to represent them here at the Statehouse, I spent over a decade up here, as well as in DC, as a grassroots gun rights advocate. I work with the DC Project, an organization of women for gun rights who believe in education not legislation, as well as being a SpokesMom for 1 Million Moms Against Gun Control.

Quite frankly, we are already teaching our school aged children about Stranger Danger, what to do if you get lost, Fire, Tornado, and Intruder Drills, Stop Drop and Roll, DARE to say no to drugs, Sex ED, Body Safety, and Drivers ED. Why would anyone purposely leave out teaching children how to keep themselves safe around firearms? Even if you personally do not keep guns in your home, you and I both want our children to know the basic formula of Stop, Don't Touch, Run Away, Tell a Grownup.

We also understand that it is not simply about teaching our children to get to a safe place if they see an unsecured gun, but it is also about

teaching our children to recognize if someone around them is being unsafe with a gun.

When you give your child consistent information of what safe gun handling looks like then they will also know what it looks like when someone is being unsafe with a gun. Those crucial moments could give them an opportunity to quickly remove themselves from an unsafe environment.

Everyone here understands that even if you do not personally own a gun our children will eventually be in the presence of someone who does. It is our responsibility as the adults to make sure we equip our children with the basic uniform and accurate education this bill provides for school districts across our state. That way, all Kansas school aged children will have the same opportunity, continuity, and standard of accident prevention education throughout their school career, even if they change districts within the state. With the passage of this bill we are equipping the future generations of Kansas with the skills and tools necessary to combat negligent firearm discharges; some which bring horrific and deadly consequences.

As my friend, Derrik LaBlanc, founder of Kids Safe Foundation says, “zero firearms accidents is the only acceptable goal.” One life lost due to a child not being taught is absolutely unacceptable; one life lost is one too many. Negligent discharge from a firearm can be prevented with proper safety training. We must do everything possible to get accident prevention education to be easily accessible in our schools.

Who wouldn't want our children to know how to get to safety and tell us that they have encountered an unsecured firearm or that someone is being unsafe with a firearm?

Who wouldn't want our children to be taught easy and effective ways to prevent accidents and avoid negligence?

Who wouldn't want to give children the tools necessary to avoid tragedy?

We can all agree that our children's safety comes before our preferences on whether or not we personally choose to exercise our inherent right to keep and bear arms.

The fact is, as an individual right, even if you don't have a gun in your home, others do.

Our children's safety comes before our personal preference on which organization happened to come up with the easy to remember phrase, Stop, Don't Touch, Run Away, Tell a Grownup.

You and I are the responsible Grownup in these lessons.

We are responsible for our children. It's our responsibility to keep them safe when they are with us and teach them to be safe when they are not with us.

I urge you to equip our children with this fundamental, uniform, decades proven effective, accident prevention education. After all, we all want our children to be safe, especially when we are not around to protect them ourselves.

Help Kansas children and Kansas communities survive and thrive by giving them the opportunity to trade in their fear for empowerment, because Education is the key to Safety.

I look forward to testifying on the House side when our bill regarding this topic comes up in hearing. We have kicked the can for far too long on this vital, life-saving, legislation. It's time to stand up for Kansas children and their safety.

Thank you.