



The Massachusetts Chapter

Executive Director

Cathleen Haggerty
860 Winter Street
Waltham, MA 02454
781-895-9852
Fax 781-895-9855
chaggerty@mcaap.org

Immediate Past President

Gregory Hagan, M.D., FAAP
Cambridge, MA
617-665-3600
gnhagan@challiance.org

President

John O'Reilly, M.D., FAAP
Springfield, MA
413-794-7448
joreilly@mcaap.org

Vice President

Michael McManus, M.D., MPH,
FAAP
Boston, MA
617-355-6000
mmcmanus@mcaap.org

Treasurer

Dmitry Dukhovny, M.D., FAAP
Boston, MA
617-355-6000
ddukhovny@mcaap.org

Secretary

Kathryn Brigham, M.D., FAAP
Boston, MA
617-355-6000
kbrigham@mcaap.org

District Representatives

District 1

Fernando Catalina, M.D., FAAP

District 2

Safdar Medina, M.D., FAAP

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Lloyd Fisher, M.D., FAAP

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Umbereen Nehal, M.D., MPH,
FAAP

District 8

Allison Brown, M.D., FAAP

District 9

Walter Rok, M.D., FAAP

September 13, 2013

To the Honorable Chairmen and Members Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security

Re: Firearm and Gun Legislation

My name is Sean Palfrey, M.D., and I am a pediatrician practicing at Boston Medical Center. I am a former president of the Massachusetts Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (MCAAP). I come before you on behalf of the 1,800 members of the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MCAAP) regarding the issue of firearms safety.

The members of the MCAAP are physicians dedicated to improving the quality of life for children by providing quality health care and advocating for them and their families. The MCAAP is committed to the attainment of optimal physical, mental and social health for all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults. We want to ensure that children can live in safety, free from gun violence and accidents.

Gun violence is a public health threat to our children. Firearms injuries are one of the top 3 causes of death among youths, causing twice as many deaths as cancer, five times as many as heart disease and 15 times as many as infections.

The tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT serves as a stark reminder that gun violence affects communities nationwide. Unfortunately, while outbursts of mass violence like that at Sandy Hook are relatively rare, the scourge of gun violence is a phenomenon that our children see every day.

The causes of gun violence are varied and complex, but we must act to develop comprehensive responses centered on the rights of children and families to be safe and free from its harmful effects in their lives and within their communities.

Massachusetts has been at the forefront in confronting gun safety issues. There continues, however, to be a need to enact common sense solutions to gun violence, and close loopholes in our laws.

There are several bills filed this session of the Legislature to address gun safety. The Massachusetts Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (MCAAP) urges the House and Senate to enact comprehensive gun safety legislation this year that would include the following principles:

Standardize the way guns are purchased such as requiring background checks regardless of venue or situation of sale:

- Close an existing loophole in order to require gun purchasers to undergo background checks at gun shows.
- Require the private sale of firearms to occur at the business of a licensed dealer so the sale can be tracked electronically.
- Enhance background checks by bringing Massachusetts into compliance with the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, and require courts to transmit all required mental health adjudications and order to the state's information system for firearms licensure only.

Limit the risk of community harm:

- Reduce access to high capacity rounds of ammunition.
- Increase penalties for violent acts using a firearm, and for illegal possession and carrying of firearms.

Improve behavioral and mental health services for children:

- Fund improved access to mental health services for children, including identifying symptoms of mental health.
- Adequately fund the Massachusetts Child Psychiatric Access Program (MCPAP): most mental illness begins in childhood and early diagnosis and treatment can help keep children healthy and prevent psychiatric disability in adulthood. MCPAP provides access to psychiatric consultation to pediatricians for medication, treatment and referral for children who exhibit signs of behavioral or mental health concerns during pediatric visits.

The MCAAP would welcome the opportunity to work with the Committee to draft and support common sense gun safety legislation.

Respectfully submitted,



Sean Palfrey, M.D., FAAP



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July 23, 2014

The Honorable Stanley C. Rosenberg
Senate Majority Leader
The State House, Room 333
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Gun Safety Legislation

Dear Senator Rosenberg,

I write on behalf of the Massachusetts Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (MCAAP) representing approximately 1,800 pediatricians across the Commonwealth. The members of the MCAAP are physicians dedicated to improving the quality of life for children by providing quality health care and advocating for them and their families. The MCAAP is committed to the attainment of optimal physical, mental and social health for all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

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As the House and Senate work to iron out the differences between their versions of gun safety legislation, the MCAAP urges the adoption of the House provision that gives police chiefs authority to deny a Firearm Identification (FID) card for a rifle or shotgun based on suitability standards contained in the House passed bill, H.4285.

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American Academy of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

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July 23, 2014

The Honorable Bruce E. Tarr
Senate Minority Leader
The State House, Room 308
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Gun Safety Legislation

Dear Senator Tarr,

I write on behalf of the Massachusetts Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (MCAAP) representing approximately 1,800 pediatricians across the Commonwealth. The members of the MCAAP are physicians dedicated to improving the quality of life for children by providing quality health care and advocating for them and their families. The MCAAP is committed to the attainment of optimal physical, mental and social health for all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

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July 23, 2014

The Honorable Anthony W. Petrucci
State House, Room 424
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Gun Safety Legislation

Dear Senator Petrucci,

I write on behalf of the Massachusetts Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (MCAAP) representing approximately 1,800 pediatricians across the Commonwealth. The members of the MCAAP are physicians dedicated to improving the quality of life for children by providing quality health care and advocating for them and their families. The MCAAP is committed to the attainment of optimal physical, mental and social health for all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

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District Representatives

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District 9

Walter Rok, M.D., FAAP

July 23, 2014

The Honorable James E. Timilty
State House, Room 507
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Gun Safety Legislation

Dear Senator Timilty,

I write on behalf of the Massachusetts Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (MCAAP) representing approximately 1,800 pediatricians across the Commonwealth. The members of the MCAAP are physicians dedicated to improving the quality of life for children by providing quality health care and advocating for them and their families. The MCAAP is committed to the attainment of optimal physical, mental and social health for all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

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July 23, 2014

The Honorable George N. Peterson, Jr
State House, Room 124
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Gun Safety Legislation

Dear Representative Peterson,

I write on behalf of the Massachusetts Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (MCAAP) representing approximately 1,800 pediatricians across the Commonwealth. The members of the MCAAP are physicians dedicated to improving the quality of life for children by providing quality health care and advocating for them and their families. The MCAAP is committed to the attainment of optimal physical, mental and social health for all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

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July 23, 2014

The Honorable Garrett Bradley
The State House, Room 479
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Gun Safety Legislation

Dear Representative Bradley,

I write on behalf of the Massachusetts Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (MCAAP) representing approximately 1,800 pediatricians across the Commonwealth. The members of the MCAAP are physicians dedicated to improving the quality of life for children by providing quality health care and advocating for them and their families. The MCAAP is committed to the attainment of optimal physical, mental and social health for all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

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July 23, 2014

The Honorable Ronald Mariano
House Majority Leader
The State House, Room 343
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Gun Safety Legislation

Dear Leader Mariano,

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The suitability determination that currently exists for handgun possession ought to apply to a rifle or shotgun, as well. It is ironic that a person determined to be unsuitable for a handgun can obtain a rifle or shotgun. The House has correctly imposed standards for determining unsuitability in order to prevent arbitrary and capricious action by a police chief along with a right of appeal for a person denied an FID card. This is a well thought out balance that protects public safety and the rights of gun owners.

It should come as no surprise that gun violence is a public health threat to our children. It is sobering to observe, however, that firearm injuries are one of the top 3 causes of death among youths, causing twice as many deaths as cancer, five times as many as heart disease and 15 times as many as infections. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an average of one Massachusetts child per week died from firearms injuries in 2010. Many more were injured, and many more were devastated at the death or injury of a family member or other loved one.



The Massachusetts Chapter

Executive Director

Cathleen Haggerty
860 Winter Street
Waltham, MA 02454
781-895-9852
Fax 781-895-9855
chaggerty@mcaap.org

Immediate Past President

John O'Reilly, M.D., FAAP
Springfield, MA
413-794-7448
joreilly@mcaap.org

President

Michael McManus, M.D., MPH,
FAAP
Boston, MA
617-355-6000
mmcmanus@mcaap.org

Vice President

DeWayne Pursley, M.D., MPH,
FAAP
Boston, MA
617-667-8000
mmcmanus@mcaap.org

Treasurer

Lloyd Fisher, M.D., FAAP
Worcester, MA
508-368-7887
lfisher@mcaap.org

Secretary

Kathryn Brigham, M.D., FAAP
Boston, MA
617-355-6000
kbrigham@mcaap.org

District Representatives

District 1

Peter Kenny, M.D., FAAP

District 2

Safdar Medina, M.D., FAAP

District 3

Fernando Catalina, M.D., Ph.D.,
FAAP

District 4

Elizabeth Goodman, M.D., FAAP

District 5

Sheila Morehouse, M.D., FAAP

District 6

Brittany Boulanger, M.D., FAAP

District 7

Umbereen Nehal, M.D., MPH, FAAP

District 8

E. James Gruver, M.D., FAAP

District 9

Walter Rok, M.D., FAAP

July 23, 2014

The Honorable Robert A. DeLeo
Speaker of the House of Representatives
The State House, Room 356
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Gun Safety Legislation

Dear Speaker DeLeo,

I write on behalf of the Massachusetts Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (MCAAP) representing approximately 1,800 pediatricians across the Commonwealth. The members of the MCAAP are physicians dedicated to improving the quality of life for children by providing quality health care and advocating for them and their families. The MCAAP is committed to the attainment of optimal physical, mental and social health for all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

Massachusetts has worked hard to be the top state in the country for child welfare [*Annie E. Casey Foundation's Kids Count Report issued June 22, 2014* <http://www.aecf.org/work/kids-count/>], but as everyone agrees, we have more to do. We at the MCAAP therefore applaud the House and Senate for taking up comprehensive gun safety legislation. In this arena, Massachusetts is also becoming a national leader. Both chambers have addressed behavioral and mental health issues in schools, background checks for the purchase of firearms, increased penalties for illegal possession and carrying of firearms; and improper storage of handguns, rifles and shotguns.

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The Massachusetts Chapter

FIREARMS SAFETY

H.4121, An Act Relative to the Reduction on Gun Violence

The Massachusetts Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (MCAAP) urges the House and Senate to enact comprehensive gun safety legislation and supports H.4121

Gun violence is a public health threat to our children. Firearms injuries are one of the top 3 causes of death among youths, causing twice as many deaths as cancer, five times as many as heart disease and 15 times as many as infections.

According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an average of one Massachusetts child per week died from firearms injuries in 2010. Many more were injured, and many more were devastated at the death or injury of a family member or other loved one. As physicians who practice in the Commonwealth, we care for these children and their families, and witness these senseless tragedies.

The causes of gun violence are varied and complex, but we must act to develop comprehensive responses centered on the rights of children and families to be safe and free from its harmful effects in their lives and within their communities.

Massachusetts has been at the forefront in confronting gun safety issues. There continues, however, to be a need to enact commonsense solutions to gun violence, and close loopholes in our laws.

Last year, House Speaker Robert DeLeo appointed a Task Force on Gun Violence, which held hearings across the state to garner public opinion concerning the large number of firearms-related bills that had been filed in the legislature. Based on the recommendations of the Task Force, Speaker DeLeo has filed H.4121, a comprehensive bill to address gun violence.

H.4121 would:

Standardize the way guns are purchased such as requiring background checks regardless of venue or situation of sale:

- Standardize gun licensing: A police chief would have authority to deny a Firearms Identification (FID) card for a rifle or shotgun based on suitability standards developed by the State Executive Office of Public Safety for handgun permits.
- Require gun purchasers to undergo background checks at gun shows.
- Require the private sale of firearms to occur at the business of a licensed dealer so the sale can be tracked.
- Enhance background checks by bringing Massachusetts into compliance with the National Instant Criminal Background Check System. State courts would transmit all required mental health adjudications and order to the state's information system for firearms licensure only.

Limit the risk of community harm by:

- Increase penalties for violent acts using a firearm, for illegal possession and carrying of firearms and improper storage of a firearm, rifle or shotgun.

Behavioral and Mental Health:

- Requires school districts to provide suicide awareness and prevention training to school personnel.
- Requires school districts to develop plans to address the mental health of students.
- Requires the Medicine Board to develop a professional development module on suicide prevention for voluntary participation by a physician.
- Establishes a special commission to study and report on mental, emotional and behavioral health in public schools.

While not fully addressed in H.4121, the MCAAP would urge the Legislature to support:

- Funding to improve access to mental health services for children, including identifying symptoms of mental health.

- Adequately fund the Massachusetts Child Psychiatric Access Program (MCPAP): most mental illness begins in childhood and early diagnosis and treatment can help keep children healthy and prevent psychiatric disability in adulthood. MCPAP provides access to psychiatric consultation to pediatricians for medication, treatment and referral for children who exhibit signs of behavioral or mental health concerns during pediatric visits.