



Memo of Support A.53/S.2991

The NYS AAP enthusiastically supports A.53/S2991 as a second component of NYS's gun control efforts. The first was the SAFE Act which has already gone a long way to help protect children and all New Yorkers from gun violence.

But SAFE did not go far enough in delineating Safe Storage as a key issue in responsible gun ownership. Safe storage requirements, when implemented with public education and law enforcement supports, have been proven to reduce children's deaths and injury from firearms. They are an important second level of gun violence prevention. This legislation clearly defines safe storage requirements and outlines consequences for not complying with those requirements.

Studies indicate that the presence of an available firearm in the house increases teen suicide. In 1997, 53 children under the age of 18 were killed in firearm homicides and 178 were injured seriously enough to be hospitalized. (Above are New York State Department of Health figures.) We believe that these numbers have increased significantly in the last fifteen years. But with the federal limitation of research into gun violence, it is impossible to secure valid numbers.

Many of these firearms were in homes, available and unlocked. A 1996 report issued by the State Department of Health indicated that a substantial number of firearm owners in New York State do not properly secure their firearms. The report, Firearm Ownership and Safe Storage in New York State, concluded, 38% reported some form of unsafe storage, where unsafe storage is defined as either failing to lock all firearms or to secure ammunition separately in a locked place. The intent of this legislation is to encourage safe firearm storage before incidents occur.

Finally, safe storage laws work. Seventeen states, including Connecticut, New Jersey and Massachusetts, have passed these laws. Accidental firearm deaths of children were reduced 23% in states with Child Access Prevention/Safe Gun Storage (CAP) Laws, according to a study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association on October 1, 1997.

We urge our legislators to take this second important step in keeping our children safe from guns.

Contact:

Elie Ward, MSW
Director of Policy & Advocacy
NYS AAP, District II
eward@aap.net