



# CITY OF HOUSTON

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Mayor

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April 9, 2019

The Honorable John Whitmire  
Chair, Senate Committee on Criminal Justice  
Texas Senate  
P.O. Box 12068 – Capitol Station  
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Chairman Whitmire and Members of the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice,

The City of Houston Mayor's Commission Against Gun Violence supports SB 1573. SB 1573 complements the City of Houston Mayor's Commission Against Gun Violence's recommendation to implement a comprehensive and ongoing safe firearm storage education and awareness campaign. The bill simultaneously complements Governor Abbott's School and Firearm Safety Action Plan recommendation to promote awareness of safe storage practices.<sup>i</sup>

"We believe that incidences of children bringing firearms to school and harming themselves or others with a firearm will decrease with the following to provide awareness and education;

**1. A school-based education program on gun safety**

We recommend that all schools and school districts implement a comprehensive and ongoing education program. There are many existing tools currently available including the Everytown's Be SMART program and the NRA's Eddie Eagle program.

**2. A community-based safe firearm storage campaign**

We recommend that the City identify and implement a community-wide awareness regarding safe gun storage coordinated through an inter-agency council comprised of representatives of the departments/agencies listed below and possibly others. This would also include public service announcements or media messaging regarding awareness of the child access protection law regarding safe storage in households with children. Existing resources such as the ad council and Brady center's "End Family Fire" campaign and Everytown for Gun Safety's resources.

**3. A state-wide Gun Safety Awareness Day**

We recommend implementing a state-wide day which would provide impetus for all Texas cities and communities to promote gun safety awareness and education. The same existing resources as above could be considered; in addition, collaborating with DPS or TxDOT to provide signage on state highways could be considered."

According to the Harris County Institute of Forensic Science statistics, guns are the second leading cause of accidental death for children in Harris County. Of the 1,074 minors who died in Harris County from 2011 to 2014, about 1 in 8 was killed by a gun, according to the data.<sup>ii</sup>

In America, 1 out of 3 homes with children have guns, and more than 2 million children live in a home with loaded and unsecured guns. Accidental shootings most commonly occur from children handling a loaded gun and shooting themselves or other children. Suicides or suicide attempts are most common using a gun found in the home, and accessible guns in the home also contribute to school shootings, as children bring in the guns from their home. These injuries are often completely preventable if simple gun safety measures are taken.

According to the Texas Department of State Health Services, there were a total of 3492 trauma hospitalizations with an injury due to firearm in 2014. The hospital charges for firearm injuries ranged from \$54 – \$5,618,050 per hospitalization. 770 (22%) of those injuries were unintentional.<sup>iii</sup>

Texas' State Department of Health Services has shown that death by firearm was the leading cause of suicide in both Texas and the United States in 2014. The rate of firearm suicide was 6.75 per 100,000 in Texas vs. 6.37 per 100,000 in the United States.<sup>iv</sup> Though guns are not the most common method by which people attempt suicide, they are the most lethal. About 85 percent of suicide attempts with a firearm end in death.<sup>v</sup>

SB1573 is an effective measure for saving lives and protecting the public.

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<sup>i</sup> [https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/press/School\\_Safety\\_Action\\_Plan\\_05302018.pdf](https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/press/School_Safety_Action_Plan_05302018.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> George, C. (2016, January 22). Guns now No. 2 cause of accidental child death in county Houston Chronicle. Retrieved from <http://www.chron.com>

<sup>iii</sup> Texas Department of State Health Services Texas EMS and Trauma Registries Hospital Data Request

<sup>iv</sup> Texas Department of Health 2014 Suicide Data Briefs

<sup>v</sup> Drexler, Madeline. "Guns and suicide: The hidden toll" Harvard School of Public Health News, Spring 2013

Sincerely,

Haley Carter  
Chair  
Mayor's Commission Against Gun Violence