

Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 2304
Submitted to the House Federal and State Affairs Committee
February 21, 2023

Dear Chairman Carpenter and Committee Members:

My name is Deborah Boatright. I am a parent, grandparent, and retired Kansas public-school educator. I offer this testimony because I am opposed to HB 2304 and the teaching of the “Eddie Eagle Program” in Kansas public schools.

There is no evidence Eddie Eagle is effective in preventing children from accessing unsecured firearms in the home. There is research that children who have gone through such training are just as likely to approach and handle firearms when not supervised as children who have not received such training. (Examples of research: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/14702451/>; <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/11943968/>; <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15342889/>) Children do not always follow adult instruction, especially when the adults are not present. In a group of unsupervised children who have access to an unsecured firearm, it only takes one of them to “disobey the rules” and cause a senseless tragedy.

Households that lock firearms and secure ammunition have an 85% lower risk of unintentional firearm injuries among children. Yet approximately 4.6 million American children still live in homes with unsecured, loaded firearms. It’s fine to talk with children about being responsible in the presence of guns, but that is a safeguard, not a guarantee. Safe storage is the only guarantee a child will not access and use a loaded firearm.

Firearms in the home should always be locked and unloaded, with ammunition stored separately. Doing this is not the responsibility of children. The onus is on adults to keep children safe. I fully support programs that educate adults about protecting their families by storing their firearms securely.

Finally, local schools should always have the right to choose the safety education program that works best for their district. HB 2304 ignores that principle. Sadly, an ever-increasing number of state-imposed mandates for local school districts makes it ever-more difficult for classroom teachers to provide the best education possible for their students and their community.

I ask that you vote “no” on HB 2304. Thank you.

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