

**Senate Select Committee on Mass Violence Prevention and Community Safety
Written Testimony by Texas Medical Association and Texas Pediatric Society
Oct. 30, 2019**

The Texas Medical Association (TMA) and the Texas Pediatric Society (TPS), representing more than 53,000 physicians and medical students across the state, are pleased to express our support of the Senate Select Committee on Mass Violence Prevention and Community Safety charge to ensure the safety of Texas communities by reducing the occurrence and impact of mass violence.

Spurred by the tragic mass violence Texas saw in Sutherland Springs and Santa Fe, the TMA House of Delegates convened a specially appointed TMA Workgroup on Firearms in 2018, chaired by Fort Worth pediatrician Gary Floyd, MD, a member of the TMA Board of Trustees. This spring, the House of Delegates adopted [two comprehensive reports](#) from the workgroup that establish new TMA policy on firearm safety. Please accept the following relevant portions of TMA policy and recommendations to the Select Committee, as they address mass violence and firearm injury, morbidity, and mortality.

The Texas Medical Association recognizes gun violence as a public health issue requiring the promotion of evidence-based strategies in Texas. The state must embrace this topic no longer as just a safety concern but as a public health crisis:

- Prioritize the primary prevention of firearm morbidity and mortality through educating Texans about firearm safety and the potential hazards of firearm ownership.
- Promote the Texas Hunter Education and certification program developed by the Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife.
- Ensure patient-physician communication is protected so physicians may provide guidance on the dangers of firearm ownership in the clinical setting in an informational, nonjudgmental manner, encouraging firearm owners to adhere to best practices for reducing the risk of accidental or intentional injuries or deaths by ensuring firearms are not accessible to children, adolescents, or people with mental, behavioral, or substance use disorders;
- Strictly enforce federal and state gun control laws and mandated penalties for crimes committed with a firearm, including illegal possession.
- Promote the use of trigger locks (such as can be provided by www.projectchildsafe.org) and locked gun cabinets to help prevent unintentional discharge.
- Equip and empower the Texas Department of State Health Services to perform unfettered study of issues involving firearms and public health and safety. Texas should participate in national surveillance studies on violence in the United States, ensuring the state has timely, accurate data on firearm-related mortality and morbidity to guide Texas' public health prevention activities.

- Develop an effective process for implementing protective orders to deal with individuals reported to be at high risk of violence to others or self-harm.

Since the adoption these reports and policy, the tragic massacres in El Paso and Midland-Odessa this past summer continue to highlight how firearm violence remains an ongoing public health crisis. TMA and TPS applaud the efforts of the Texas Senate in convening this select committee to prioritize protecting Texas families and communities. We recognize that about 40% of U.S. adults own one or more firearms or live in a home where a firearm is present. We also recognize that gun ownership is associated with an individual's personal freedom, and protection is a key reason why many own one or more firearms. In the same vein of protection, our members remain focused on proven prevention and harm-reduction methods in all areas of public and population health. Physicians accept their role in addressing mass violence and firearm safety and are compelled to do all that they can to help protect their patients and their communities.

Attachment: May 2019 TMA House of Delegates Reports