

My name is Grace Springer. I am a junior at Olathe East High School and a volunteer with the Kansas chapter of Students Demand Action.

Today I am here to state my opposition to HB 2803, a dangerous bill that would undermine the enforcement and effectiveness of federal gun safety laws.

March 4th of 2021 a firearm was brought into my school. I was in my advisory room when the announcements came on. It said to have teachers check their emails. My teacher was not there that day and so we called another room. We were told to lock our doors and rumors started floating around the classroom.

At first it was rumored to be a stabbing, but after getting a text from one of my friends at Olathe North saying there was a shooting, my heart dropped. My classroom froze and for a moment there was silence as people tried to process how and why this was happening. Then we all began making calls to our parents and friends. I didn't start crying until I called my Mom. Not being able to be with her was one of the hardest parts of the day. I told her that I loved her and that if anything happened to me I'm so glad she was a part of my life.

After everyone had finished calling we sat around the classroom waiting to hear news. For hours there was limited information given. [hours later?] an officer knocked on our door and the classroom froze. I remember holding my friend's hand as we held our breath. He asked if there was anything suspicious within our classroom. As we had waited so long to leave the classroom there was something so foreign about being able to step outside. The hallways were lined with FBI, police, firefighters, medics, bomb squads, and deputies.

We should be focusing on ways to prevent school shootings from happening in the first place instead of making it harder for law enforcement to respond to them.

Firearm deaths are the leading cause of death in children and teens. 68% of gun deaths in Kansas are by firearm suicide, that's an average of 311 deaths per year.

Every year, nearly 350 children under the age of 18 unintentionally shoot themselves or someone else. More than 700 children die by gun suicide each year, most often using guns belonging to a family member, and the US Secret Service found that three-quarters of school shooters acquired their firearm from the home of a parent or close relative. Why then are we not focused on research backed solutions to these problems such as secure storage and extreme risk protection orders?

I remember when we were released I did my best to move down the hallway without panicking. My class was then escorted to the drop off locations and I was put on a bus over to a local

middle school. As I was entering the school I saw my mom waiting for me. Not being able to run and hug her was defeating. I broke down and started sobbing when I was ushered past her. I waited for her to sign in to pick me up for what felt like an eternity. When my family went to dinner that night I was unable to eat anything. It was hard for me to process that I had been in a shooting that day. Everything was moving so quickly but slowly, and I felt so alone.

I don't want anyone else to feel alone like that. Please oppose this bill and take action to help people my age. I want to know my law enforcement officials are using every tool that they can, and this bill would tie their hands.

I mentioned research backed methods earlier. One study found that households that locked both firearms and ammunition were associated with a 78 percent lower risk of self-inflicted firearm injuries and an 85 percent lower risk of unintentional firearm injuries among children, compared to those that locked neither. Another study estimated that if half of households with children that contain at least one unlocked gun switched to locking all their guns, one-third of youth gun suicides and unintentional deaths could be prevented, saving an estimated 251 lives in a single year.

Kansas has the 21st highest mortality rate by firearms in the US. Our goal should be to lower that, not increase it. Undermining the enforcement of federal gun laws would only make things worse, and I urge you to vote no on this bill.