From:	Dannette Fadness
To:	Grp. City Council and City Web Site
Subject:	Public Safety and Health Committee meeting public comment
Date:	Wednesday, February 3, 2021 12:14:55 PM

Greetings,

As a mother, grandmother, a child injury prevention and suicide prevention educator, I am here to say that the Be Safe program is not a developmentally appropriate education for kids.

The American Academy of Pediatrics and CDC state that gun violence is a public health epidemic that is injuring and killing our children at alarming rates. These organizations as well as Safe Kids Worldwide, Everytown for gun safety, Be SMART program and suicide prevention programs all agree that easy access to firearms is a major factor in this epidemic. They all agree that the onus is on adults to keep kids safe by responsibly storing guns unloaded, locked, and out of reach and sight of youth with ammunition locked and stored separately.

I think we can all agree we want kids to grow up to be safe, healthy and happy, so I understand and I agree that firearm safety education is important for families.

The Be Safe program is not developmentally age appropriate for 6-8 year old kids, and it lacks the agreed upon safety measures and adult responsibilities noted above to have firearms secured, unloaded, locked and out of reach and sight of youth.

I have talked to thousands of families about responsible storage and given out thousands of gunlocks. We want all families to know what it means to be SMART and help them to have the tools available to store firearms responsibly to keep families safe. We agree that teaching kids to not touch a gun and go find an adult is important but when it comes down to it, responsible storage is the best way to ensure kids safety if you decide to have a firearm in your home.

Firearm safety best practice places the onus on adults to keep kids safe from guns unlike the Be Safe brochures that seeks to “gun proof our the kids.” Research shows that 4.6 million kids live in homes in the US with at least one unsecured firearm. It also shows that parents believe their kids do not know where their firearms are stored when in fact the same research shows that 70% of kids know where they are stored and 35% of them have handled them without their parents knowledge.

Montana is third in youth suicides and suicide among young people has increased at an alarming rate over the last decade. We know that easy access to fatal means is killing our youth—in as little as five minutes from thought to follow through youth are completing suicide. In 2017, the youngest two suicides were completed by seven year olds. Montanas suicide rates have been in the top 5 for 40 years and close to 67% of our suicides completed by firearm and in Missoula that number is closer to 75%. 80% of school shootings by 14018 year olds are completed with a firearm they gained access to at home or a relative’s home. We cannot talk enough about responsible storage.

I think we can all agree gun violence is an epidemic and education is vital to keeping our kids safe.

Kids are curious so, “Don’t touch” is an astoundingly useless thing to tell first through third graders—which is shown far too often with the over 300 kids that gain access and shoot themselves or others each year.

In a congressional report by the Government Accountability Office, they found that teaching kids not to touch firearms is highly ineffective noting: most of the children were able to verbally recall the safety message, but when the children found a gun they did not leave the area or tell an adult during the assessment. They found this method was only effective with intensive training, which this brochure clearly cannot provide.

The CDC, American Academy of Pediatrics and all the other major safety organizations agree that responsible storage—which is unloaded, locked and out of reach and sight of youth is the way to keep kids safe.

However, this brochure lacks these safety measures and seeks to normalize gun access for children noting:

“…look at their [parents] guns locked in the [glass front cabinet] gun cabinet.” It goes on to talk about how, “Their parents let [the kids] spend as much time as they want looking at the guns and talking about gun safety…[as] they will soon be ready for their first .22 rifles.”

The brochure glamorizes guns and makes it seem like because a child has received this brief education, they are ready to handle firearms, which endangers children and may give families a false sense of safety.

Kids are curious, so it is vital for the safety of our children that the onus be on adults to ensure they do not have unsupervised access to guns and that we abide by the best practices put out by all the major safety organizations noted above and ensure that adults responsibility store firearms.

I ask that you vote ‘No’ to this resolution for the safety of our community and children.

Thank you,
Dannette Fadness
Missoula resident
child injury and suicide Prevention Educator