



Physicians Caring for Texans

Senate Committee on State Affairs
Testimony by Lauren K. Gambill, MD, Texas Medical Association
Senate Bill 728 by Sen. Joan Huffman
March 2, 2023

Chair Hughes and Committee Members:

My name is Dr. Lauren Gambill, and I'm a pediatrician here in Austin testifying on behalf of the Texas Medical Association's more than 57,000 physician and medical student members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today *in support* of Senate Bill 728, and thank you to Senator Huffman for authoring this legislation.

Although we have physicians on both sides of the gun debate, we are united in wanting to prevent firearm deaths and injuries. As physicians, we are on the front lines treating individuals injured by firearms, and counseling families when it happens. The aftermath of any firearm tragedy reverberates not only in our hospitals and exam rooms, but throughout the same communities we live in, raise our kids in, and are a part of.

The heart of this bill ensures certain minors who are sent to a psychiatric hospital are properly reported to the FBI's NICS. We also must make sure these individuals and others are receiving proven child, family, and community interventions, and we should expand investments in health and social services. This will help reduce violence by promoting healthy, nurtured, and resilient children, families, and communities – which might especially be significant if these individuals one day find themselves having access to firearms.

If they do get access to a gun, we all want to make sure they have received the proper support, care, and counseling to make good decisions. The earlier these services can be provided, the greater the likelihood of better outcomes; but first they *must* be able to access the services.

Let me also unequivocally state that most people diagnosed with a mental health condition, even a severe one, rarely commit mass violent crimes. This is important to note so people who need mental health services feel safe seeking care without fear of stigma. More often, people diagnosed with a mental health condition are *victims* of violence, including self-inflicted harm.¹

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today in support of S.B. 728, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

¹ [Suicide and Mental Health in Texas | Hogg Foundation for Mental Health \(utexas.edu\)](https://www.utexas.edu/hoggfoundation/mentalhealth)