Dear School Board Members… PTA Presidents...:

I am writing as a concerned member of the community regarding the problem of gun violence in our area. The tragedy that took place yesterday at Oxford High School is but one horrific example of what can happen when firearms get into the hands of the wrong individuals. In addition, the Thanksgiving Day fatal shooting of a five year old by her three year old cousin in Georgia demonstrates how dangerous unlocked and loaded guns are in the homec. We sadly have had many similar unintentional death incidents in Michigan in the last 12 months.

In the US, firearms are the second leading cause of death for children and teens and the leading cause of death for Black children and teens. During the Pandemic gun sales surged 64 percent, and the number of unintentional shootings of young children increased 31 percent from March-December 2020. Firearms are the second leading cause of death among children and teens in Michigan. In an average year, 1,212 people die and 3,507 people are wounded by guns in Michigan, and 90 children die every year from gun violence**.** At least 30 % of Michigan households have at least one gun.

How can we help families in our community keep our kids safe? I believe it is **by teaching parents about gun safety**. Children cannot be relied upon to exercise caution around guns. Their immature brains do not permit them to make reasoned decisions. It is upon us, the adults, to make sure that guns are stored and used safely.

BeSMART is a nationwide campaign created to educate adults on the importance of safe gun storage. In a 20 minute slide show, the program does not endorse or condemn gun ownership, it merely reminds parents of the importance of being aware of guns in the community, in one’s own home, as well as others. BeSMART also has printed and digital materials that could be sent home to every family in the district to ensure the message is received.

For a brief video on the BeSMART message, please click this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_TbK66RSvp8&feature=youtu.be>

This program is available to present to adult members of families in your school district. Parents can register for the program online and watch a Zoom presentation at a time convenient for them. I believe that parents in our schools would be fully supportive of the BeSMART message, and NOW is the time. I have attached two documents which further describe the BeSMART program and include links to upcoming online BeSMART presentations for you to access:

December 13, 7pm Be SMART Zoom presentation: <https://forms.everytown.org/a/mi-statewide-december-be-smart-presentation-zoom>

January 18, 7pm Be SMART Zoom presentation: <https://forms.everytown.org/a/mi-statewide-january-be-smart-presentation>

Please consider offering this service to families in your school district, and/or collaborating with Be SMART to spread the critical message of safe storage at home.

Even if we save one child’s life, we have done a great service.

For more information and resources, please see: <https://besmartforkids.org/resources/>

Sincerely,

Skye Thietten

Brewster Elementary Parent