

Michigan school shooting shows why we need safe gun storage laws

While simply passing a law will never mean that everyone adheres to it, passing such laws will also result in more awareness, which in turn will get more people to act responsibly.

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Signage on display in windows of businesses to show support for Oxford High School on December 7 in Oxford, Michigan. | Emily Elconin/Getty Images

The recent school shooting in Oxford, Michigan that left four students dead and seven wounded has highlighted the need for laws requiring safe storage of guns and ammunition.

So far, it appears from published reports that the 15-year-old suspected shooter could have obtained the gun from an unlocked dresser in his parents' home. Had there been a law in Michigan on safe storage, this tragedy may have been avoided.

Here in Illinois, House Bill 2254, the Safe Gun Storage bill, would require that firearms be secured in a locked container and properly engaged so the firearm is inaccessible or unusable to anyone other than the owner or lawfully authorized user.

Not surprisingly, the bill failed when it was first proposed in 2019 and 2020. But since the Michigan tragedy, the bill or a similar bill will likely be reintroduced.

Safe gun storage laws are especially important for families of divorce, as some parents may not be on the same page when it comes to gun safety. Such laws also raise public awareness, which in turn will get more people to act responsibly.

It is also important to note that a safe gun storage bill is not an infringement on legal gun ownership. Such proposals should be welcomed by all responsible gun owners.

Oakland County prosecutor Karen McDonald also charged the alleged shooter's parents with involuntary manslaughter, partly because they allegedly allowed their son access to a handgun while ignoring glaring warnings that he was on the brink of violence. Parents of underage school shooters have come under scrutiny before, but rarely held criminally responsible — even though many shooters obtained their guns from home.

We will have to wait and see what facts emerge in court. However, one thing seems certain: If the gun had been locked and secured, other questions would be moot — and four beautiful students would still be alive.

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