

House Bill 2793:

**Suicide Awareness and Prevention Education for Safer Homes
Background Brief**

Due to bipartisan action by state legislators, *Washington is now the most innovative state in the nation with regard to suicide prevention.* It has adopted laws to increase skills that are essential to suicide prevention among behavioral health, healthcare and school professionals, who are in key positions to identify and help those struggling with suicidal thoughts and attempts.¹

These laws are crucial because many suicides are preventable. In 2014, 1,111 Washington residents died by suicide. According to the Washington State Department of Health: more than a fifth of these tragic deaths were military veterans; suicide is more common in the rural than the urban parts our state and, on average, two young people between the ages of 10 and 24 die by suicide each week in Washington.²

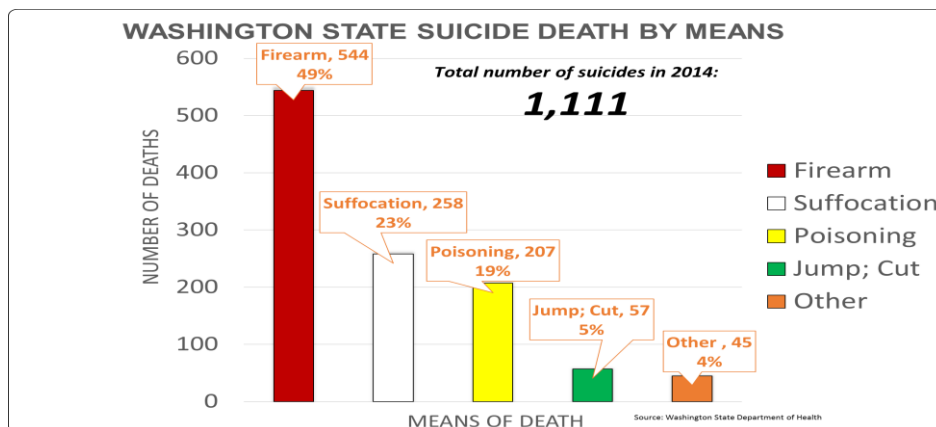
Families bereaved by suicide tell us the public health problem of suicide was not on their radar before tragedy struck. Lethal means, such as firearms and prescription medications, were accessible to their loved ones at-risk.

Therefore, this bill calls for new partnerships in suicide prevention to establish a Safe Homes Task Force, specifically with pharmacists and firearm dealers, who are in key positions to raise public awareness about suicide and the need for safe storage and medication disposal.

- The majority of suicides take place in people’s homes using easily accessible lethal means, such as guns or prescription drugs.³
- Increased suicide prevention awareness and education, coupled with immediate access to safe storage devices and medication disposal kits, can make Washington’s families less vulnerable to suicide.

Innovative and practical, this act relating to providing suicide prevention awareness and prevention education for safer homes will:

1. Develop and disseminate suicide prevention trainings for firearm retailers and pharmacists;
2. Develop and disseminate a tool-kit for firearm and prescription retailers to provide customers with educational materials on suicide prevention at the point of sale;
3. Incorporate new suicide prevention messaging into existing firearm safety pamphlets and firearm safety trainings;
4. Pilot test and evaluate the coupling of suicide prevention training with the distribution of safe storage devices and medication disposal kits in two communities with high suicide rates;
5. Provide financial incentives for firearm retailers to sell safe storage devices at cost, to display tool-kit materials and to train employees in suicide awareness and education.



1 www.intheforefront.org/policy/past

2 WA State Suicide Prevention Plan <http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/Pubs/631-058-SuicidePrevPlan.pdf>

3 <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/basic-suicide-facts/where/>