**Many Tennessee parents still have concerns about community violence, school safety;**

*Nearly 7 in 10 say they support of safe gun storage initiatives*

New analyses from researchers at the Monroe Carell Jr. Children’s Hospital at Vanderbilt shows that nearly 8 in 10 of Tennessee parents report some level of concern about community gun violence, and the majority support firearm storage education initiatives.

Concerns about gun violence are not evenly distributed across the state. The latest analysis of the annual Child Health Poll of approximately 1,000 Tennessee parents, 50% of which are gun owners, conducted in late 2024, found that roughly 2 in 3 parents in West Tennessee reported some level of concern about gun violence, compared to just over half in East Tennessee. Differences across racial and ethnic groups also emerged including 47% of Black parents reporting being “very concerned,” a striking increase compared to other racial and ethnic groups voicing this level of concern (28-32%), researchers said.

“These findings reflect the lived experiences of families across Tennessee differences in perceived or real, actual exposure to gun violence across racial and ethnic groups and within communities,” said Kelsey Gastineau, MD, MPH, a pediatric hospitalist at Monroe Carell Jr. Children’s Hospital and Vanderbilt.

Approximately 1 in 4 parents who were polled said they have considered changing schools over concerns about violence and school safety, Gastineau said.

“These responses speak to a broader crisis in child well-being,” Gastineau said. ”In a state where school shootings have made national headlines, it’s alarming — but not surprising — that some many families, particularly Black families, are considering drastic changes to protect their children. It underscores the urgency of preventive solutions that restore a sense of safety.”

**Most parents support safe storage, education initiatives**

Nearly 7 in 10 parents (69%) polled said they are in favor of secure storage laws that would require gun owners to store firearms in a way that prevents access by children or unauthorized users. Similar policies have been discussed in the Tennessee legislature.

“Over several years of polling, Tennessee families have consistently supported policies that prioritize children’s safety,” said Gastineau. “Secure firearm storage is one of many preventive measures that parents endorse reflecting a clear, ongoing desire for practical, evidence-informed approaches to reduce risk and keep kids safe.”

**About the Child Health Poll**

The Vanderbilt Child Health Poll is conducted annually to gauge parents’ concerns about a wide range of topics. The data, collected from a representative sample of Tennessee parents across each of the three grand divisions of the state, focuses on child health issues ranging from education to food security, insurance status and mental health. Roughly 80% of all parents polled identified as registered voters.