



To:  
The Honorable Floyd Prozanski  
Senate Judiciary Committee

Subject:  
Senate Bill 700, Requires person to request criminal background check before transferring firearm to any other person outside the transferor's immediate family.

April 5, 2013

Chair Prozanski, members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am a physician in the Department of Pediatrics at Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU), and a member of the Oregon Pediatric Society (OPS). Today, I would like to offer my strong personal support and the support of the OPS for Senate Bill (SB) 700. We feel that this legislation is crucial to protect Oregon's children from gun violence.

For personal reasons, I believe there is a need for legislative reform to prevent gun violence from hurting Oregon's youth. But my primary goal in speaking today is to share my opinion as a professional. My first job as a pediatrician is to protect children and adolescents from harm. And the greatest threat to kids today is not infection or cancer, but injuries.

Among the causes of lethal injury threatening America's youth, gun violence stands out near the top. Firearm related deaths are among the top 3 causes of death for US children. According to CDC data, gun violence accounted for 6,570 deaths among Americans under the age of 24 in 2010 alone. That is an average of 18 gun-related youth deaths every day, a number which approaches the death toll in the Newtown disaster...and it is incurred on a daily basis.

As a pediatrician, I know firsthand that the death of a child causes an unknowable sadness for that child's family and his/her community. The tragedy of that loss is intensified in cases of gun-related deaths, because we know that such injuries can be prevented. A law that requires criminal background checks before the transfer of guns between private parties would help to decrease the needless gun violence facing our youth by preventing firearms from slipping into the hands of individuals who would misuse them. In passing SB 700, Oregon would take an important step by limiting access to guns among those who perpetrate violent criminal acts, commit homicide or suicide, or traffic guns to others with sinister intentions.



I mentioned earlier that I have personal reasons for promoting reform efforts to protect children and adolescents from gun violence. Tragically, like so many others among us today, I lost a friend to gun violence here in Oregon. He committed suicide by shooting himself during our freshman year of high school. The gun was owned by his family and was kept in a secured storage unit.

To some, this story may seem irrelevant to SB 700, but to me it is a reminder that in our current system, even when the appropriate safety measures are taken for privately owned guns, tragedies can still occur. Our system is not perfect, and needs to be changed. Many of the tragic gun deaths that have taken place in our state are preventable, and if there are steps we can take to make Oregon safer to any degree for our youth, we need to do it. Increasing the surveillance of gun transfers that occur here in our state is an important step in that direction.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions you might have.

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