

Public Testimony Submission for Testimony given to the Hearing for SB 1551

I returned from Nicaragua on Tuesday night, so hadn't had time to prepare and submit my statement. I spoke from the heart today.

Honorable Senator Prozanski, chair, Vice-Chair Senator Betsy Close, Senator Dembrow, Senator Jeff Cruse and Senator Arnie Roblan, I am speaking for SB 1551.

This bill is a public health issue, not a political issue, to me. I cannot sit on the sidelines while others try to make universal background checks political. I must speak out.

I am a mother of three grown children and the grandmother of 9. I am an active member in my Christian church.

My husband was a physician, stationed in Japan during the VN War, from 1967 through 1970. He was responsible for triage of military personnel wounded in VN. I visited wounded military personnel, too fragile to be evacuated back to the States, and learned firsthand what gunshot wounds are like. I will never forget a young man who'd been shot in the face and would be going home to his mother, who'd sent him off to war, whole.

When my youngest child was a junior in HS, I went back to school and became a counselor. I was privileged to work with veterans and their families at the US Veteran's Hospital, on the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder team, for over 19 years, before retiring at 70 in 2010.

As a mental health counselor, I know too well the tragedy of suicide, that permanent solution to temporary problems. For example, the son of a veteran bought a gun over the internet, so he wouldn't have to identify himself and killed himself because he received an F in chemistry and was afraid his parents would be mad at him. Most suicides are impulsive. If this fine young man, very loved by his parents, had had to wait for a background check, he may still be alive.

I've worked with multiple veterans who've told me that they were so depressed they sat with a gun in their mouths. They were asked to give their guns to a friend and they all did and thanked me later. Others let me know that they feared they would hurt their wives or family members in a rage response. They, too, gave up their guns until they felt safe to respond.

Beside my work with hundreds of veterans, from WWII, Korea, VN, Granada, Panama, the Gulf War, to Afghanistan and Iraq, I was a member of the debriefing team that arrived at Thurston HS, after the shootings. Our PTSD team had been at a raining in Roseburg. We were diverted to be with students and staff. There was still blood on the floor of the cafeteria. Children and teachers were in shock. That memory has stayed with me through all the other school shootings. And always will.

Let's cut through the anti-background check rhetoric. States with Universal Background Checks have saved lives; 39% fewer homicides by guns for women in domestic violence situations, 49 % fewer suicides by gun, and 40% fewer law enforcement officers are killed by handguns.

Most significantly, when the state of Missouri repealed their Universal Background Check Laws in 2007, their gun deaths went up 25%. As a mental health counselor and a person too familiar with gun violence, I know that this isn't a Republican or Democratic issue. It's a human issue that all people of good will can support.

Universal Background Checks are a public health and safety issue and as such can be supported by any one who cares about domestic violence killings, suicides, accidental and gang violence.

Please vote to have SB 1551 go to the full senate for further discussion. Allow a vote. The lives of people you love, as well as those of your constituents, may well be at stake.

Respectfully submitted,
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