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February 5, 2014

I am writing today to urge you to **support Senate Bill 1551.**

Each day women and children, and some men, are killed with a gun by their abusive partner—most often when the victim is trying to escape the abuse. Over 225 Oregonians have been killed in domestic violence incidents since 2003—over 60% from gunshot wounds. Each month Oregonians are sexually assaulted at the mercy of a firearm. By supporting Senate Bill 1551 lives will be saved.

Last October a **5 year old child** called a family friend crying in the phone-

*“Josh hurt mommy ... Josh shot mommy”*

Jessie Doyle Cavett was murdered at point blank range with a gun in front of her two daughters, ages two and five. The man who murdered her was her estranged husband. Jessie had left the relationship and even had a restraining order against him--- but that was not enough. Joshua Cavett was not legally permitted to have a gun. Loopholes in our background check system allow anyone to buy a gun with complete anonymity.

Background checks are a critical safeguard that works. Since 1998 the national background checks system has blocked the sale of more than 25,000 guns to domestic abusers. Studies have shown that states that require background checks on all handgun sales have a 38% lower rate of women being shot to death by their partner.

On November 3, 2013 Oregon City Reserve Officer Libke responded to a 9-1-1 call for a house fire. At the scene he was shot and killed by a domestic abuser who just hours earlier had strangled his girlfriend. Domestic and sexual violence is a community issue.

Every day dozens of victims take the courageous steps to leave a violent relationship. The risk of death goes up exponentially when a victim is trying to take these steps or has successfully left the relationship and started a new life for themselves and their children, like Jessie had done. In our society we tell the victim to ‘just leave’ and the victim is burdened with forging a path to safety at a time when her life is at the greatest risk... add a gun to the equation and the 5-year old Peyton’s of Oregon will continue to carry the weight of the loss of a mother at the hands of a domestic violence abuser with a gun.

Support Senate Bill 1551

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Melissa Erlbaum'.

Melissa Erlbaum, MPA  
Executive Director