



To: Senate Judiciary Committee
From: James P. Scott, MD
President, National Physicians Alliance
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I'm Dr. Jim Scott, here to testify in support of SB 1551. I'm a family practitioner, Oregon born and raised, practiced in Florence for 20 years, followed by another 20 year career focused on health care quality and patient safety. Now I serve as President of the National Physicians Alliance. Our organization has produced this white paper focusing on gun violence prevention, available at http://npalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/Gun_Safety_Public_Health_Joint_Report-092513.pdf

I've been an advocate for sensible gun violence prevention measures for over 40 years – I was trained in gun safety as a boy scout, later shattered by the assassinations of 1967 and 1968 – my first experience of testifying in this legislature focused on a gun violence prevention measure that year – defeated by the NRA. As a physician, I've seen first-hand the ravages of gun violence – senseless tragedies that are too often preventable. While in Florence, I served as the local medical examiner. My fantasies of 'Quincy'-like investigations weren't realized. But I did see impulsive suicide gestures by local teenagers – those by overdose never fatal, those by firearms, always. And one never forgets the tragedy of a family that 'didn't know it was loaded', or tells you 'I didn't think he knew where it was'. A public health approach to automobile injury and death has resulted in a 90% reduction of deaths/vehicle mile traveled over the years. There was no one easy answer to this problem – just as background checks are only one part of the answer for gun violence prevention. Safer cars, seat belts, MADD, safer highways – there have been myriad improvements – technical, cultural, regulatory. In aggregate, the results have been amazing. Same thing in consumer product safety, tobacco use, heart disease, and so many more. Gun violence fatalities have gone the other way – more Oregonians die from gun violence every year than from automobile accidents. We need to pursue the same sensible, evidence based approach to taming this epidemic.

Oregon voters approved what they thought were universal background checks over a decade ago. Evidence tells us that they work – states with tighter background check laws have seen a reduction in both homicides and suicides. It's time to close the loophole in that voter approved law as a first step in a sensible approach to ending this scourge.

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