



March 25, 2015

Senator Floyd Prozanski, Chair
Oregon Senate Judiciary Committee
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: SB 525

Chair Prozanski and Members of the Committee:

I am the research and publications coordinator at the Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, and I assist in the coordination of the Oregon Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team. The Coalition supports the passage of Senate Bill 525.

A firearm is a tool that domestic violence perpetrators utilize to increase power and control over their victims. In the hands of domestic violence perpetrators, firearms are employed to intimidate, punish, threaten, and end the lives of their chosen victims, and sometimes themselves. Firearms are tools that escalate the severity and increase the ease of exercising power and control in abusive relationships.

Murder is the ultimate act of power and control that an abuser can exercise. It represents the annihilation of the victim's autonomy. In Oregon in any given year, approximately 60 percent of domestic violence deaths result from the use of a firearm. From 2003 through 2014, at least 220 people were killed in our state in this manner. My experience serving on the Oregon Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team, answering crisis calls and speaking with community programs through my role at the Oregon Coalition, and researching this topic indicates that this final act is almost always preceded by a pattern of abuse that is severe enough to leave imprints in the local community. Someone, some organization, some hospital, some police agency, knows that there is abuse.

A restraining order is a red flag that cannot be ignored. In order to receive one, the victim has already shown that the abuser is a credible threat to her physical safety and that she is in imminent danger of further abuse. A conviction for a crime involving domestic violence is likewise a red flag. Furthermore, abusers often fear loss of control and escalate their abuse when victims take action. Prohibiting the abuser from possessing a

firearm and ammunition following the granting of a restraining order or a conviction will protect victims and their children. It reduces ease of access to a tool that increases the risk of lethality.

The Oregon Coalition represents 47 of the state's 56 domestic and sexual violence community organizations, and works extensively with the rest. It is these organizations and their partners that work to keep victims safe, and support surviving family members in the event of the worst outcome. On behalf of these programs and advocates, I urge you to increase the safety of domestic violence victims and their family members through passage of Senate Bill 525.

Respectfully,

Chloe Massarello
Research and Publications Coordinator
Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
1737 NE Alberta St., suite 205
Portland, OR 97211
503-230-1951
chloe@ocadsv.org