

**Jake Weigler, Oregon Alliance for Gun Safety
Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 945**

Chair Prozanski, members of the committee:

My name is Jake Weigler and I am with the Oregon Alliance for Gun Safety. The Alliance represents over 50 organizations across Oregon committed to passing common-sense gun legislation that will slow the epidemic of gun violence in Oregon. The Alliance works closely with partners from across the nation, including Sandy Hook Promise – an organization led by family members whose loved ones were killed in the tragic mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

Today I will be reading a statement from Mark Barden, who lost his son Daniel in that shooting. Mark wanted to be here today, but was unable to due to a scheduling conflict.

On December 14, 2012, my son Daniel was killed in his first grade classroom at Sandy Hook Elementary School. In one unimaginable moment, the love and light of a sweet little boy who held doors for adults, rescued worms from the driveway and made friends with kids who sat alone was taken from our family and the world forever.

Every day since my beautiful son Daniel was killed has been a difficult journey – and truthfully, the days do not get any easier.

It is impossible for me to explain to you what this feels like - to have your baby taken from you and to know that it was someone else's decision.

Unlike what happened to my family, you have the opportunity to prevent another family from living this indescribable pain.

In September 2013, I started my work with the non-profit organization Sandy Hook Promise because the best way I can find to honor my Daniel is by helping to protect other children from gun violence.

As the advocacy director at Sandy Hook Promise, I hear stories every single day of lives taken in senseless tragedies, the most senseless of all being preventable accidents involving children. Just a few days ago, a 1 year old in Cleveland was killed when another child picked up an unattended firearm. He was the 24th child killed by an accidental gunshot in 2015. We can't allow this to keep happening.

We all know that children are dying because firearms are left unsecured in homes. Right here in Oregon, an estimated 26,000 children live in a home with an unsecured gun, and countless more visit or play in those homes. We also know that someone who unintentionally injures or kills a friend or loved one has to live with that horror for the rest of his or her life. The lasting impact of these tragic deaths is widespread and immeasurable. These deaths and injuries are preventable.

Senate Bill 945 is simply about protecting children, which all parents want to do. It makes it clear that it is the gun owner's responsibility to make sure your children or children that visit your home won't find your firearm and have a horrible accident with it.

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I'm optimistic that most or all of you will support this simple and effective tool that will help keep firearms out of the hands of children.

We support and applaud the efforts of those that offer firearms safety training programs designed for children. That's a good start, but it's clearly not enough. It's also foolish to assume that a 3 year old will follow those guidelines when he happens upon a sleek, shiny device under the bed.

That fact is that, as a responsible, law abiding gun owner, this bill doesn't affect you at all. But it might make your community a safer place, and prevent a terrible accident or tragedy.

I know that most gun owners with children in the home are serious about making sure their children or visiting children aren't able to access the firearm. But we also know, all too well, that there are many homes where this is unfortunately not the case. There are people who just don't understand the seriousness of this situation. Senate Bill 945 basically informs these folks that this is the law, and we have to be serious about protecting our children.

S.B. 945 provides you the freedom to have as many guns in your home as you want. There are numerous storage devices and locking systems that are reliable, inexpensive and provide practically instant access.

I understand that Senate Bill 945 won't completely stop all gun violence, but it will help. It will save lives by keeping firearms out of the hands of children.

In the days following the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary, my son James exclaimed, "I just hope no other family ever has to go through this"

When you vote for Senate Bill 945, **you are literally saving children's lives.**