

Members of the committee,

My name is Dr. Bonnie New and I live in Hood River. I've been a physician for over 30 years.

I've seen the effects of gun violence first hand – for a number of years, I worked in an Emergency Department in Houston Texas and I've seen more gunshot victims than I care to remember.

I care deeply about the health of our communities and believe we must employ sound public policy to protect the public's health. Gun violence has reached epidemic proportions in our state and nation and should be understood and treated as a public health crisis.

A public health approach has been successful in reducing death and disability from infectious diseases, automobile accidents, unsafe food, and consumer products. But similar strategies have not been put in effect to address injuries and fatalities from firearms. We see the tragic result of these policy failures in our work. Here in Oregon, there are more fatalities each year from firearms than from motor vehicle traffic accidents.

Closing the loopholes in our background checks is a critical policy prescription to help reduce gun violence in our state. Evidence shows that when background checks are required, they are effective at keeping guns out of the hands of prohibited persons such as criminals. Since the federal background check requirement was adopted in 1994, over two million prohibited persons have been denied a firearm transfer or permit. Closing the private sale loophole in Oregon state law is a simple way we can crack down on criminals' easy access to firearms.

The people of Oregon have responded. 87 percent say they support expanding background checks on gun purchases. It's common sense, but the evidence makes the case for background checks as well. Residents of the 14 states that have expanded background checks beyond the federal standard are safer. Compared to the rest of the country here are the stats:

- Gun trafficking in these states is 48 percent lower.
- The rate at which women are killed with a gun by an intimate partner is 46 percent lower.
- And the gun suicide rate is 48 percent lower.

Now this law, like any other law, will not be perfect. Law enforcement will not be able to police every single transaction. Some criminals will still get guns. There will still be gun violence.

But this law will allow responsible gun owners to make sure their guns don't end up in the hands of criminals. It will give law enforcement a critical tool to fight gun trafficking and gun violence. It will make it more difficult for criminals to get guns. And, most importantly, it will save lives. Maybe the life of someone you know. All without infringing on the Second Amendment rights of law abiding Oregonians.

Your colleagues in the Senate voted to pass this bill, now it is your turn to take action to confront the epidemic of gun violence in our communities.

This bill can and will save lives.