

Testimony of Jenna Yuille

Before the House Committee on Rules Hearing on SB 941, April 22, 2015

Thank you Madame Chair and members of the House Committee on Rules. My name is Jenna Yuille, and I live in Portland. I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 941 to require background checks on all gun sales.

I am here because I am determined to prevent any other family from feeling the enormous pain I felt on Tuesday, December 11, 2012, when my mom, Cindy, was shot and killed doing some last minute Christmas shopping at the Clackamas Town Center. I am here because my family and I are now forced to live with the unimaginable "new normal," of my mom being gone. Where every time I want to pick up the phone and give her a call, I can't. My mom won't be there when I get married; she won't be there when I have my first child. For all of those moments when your mom is supposed to be right by your side, she won't be there, because she was murdered. Her life was cut short by a senseless and preventable act of gun violence.

My mom was an incredible woman and the best mother a kid could ask for. She was warm and friendly – the kind of person you always wanted to be around. She loved the outdoors, and embraced all of life's adventures. She cared about her community, and about making this world a better place. She collected recycling from our neighbors and brought her own bags to the grocery store long before it was cool. My mom was a hospice nurse, which speaks volumes to the type of person she was. She took care of people at the end of their lives as they were dying. And she was beloved by her patients and their families.

My mom was also never one to be silenced when she saw an injustice. If I were the one who had been killed that day at the Clackamas Town Center, she would be doing everything in her power to help create change — so that no other family would have to go through what we did, and be forced to live with this unbelievable new reality. My mom was not killed in an accident. Her death was completely preventable, and I am here because I am determined to bring some justice to her murder, and to turn this unthinkable tragedy into action.

I never planned to be an activist, and certainly never thought I would be sitting here before a legislative committee testifying on gun laws, of all things. But when tragedy after tragedy has been met with inaction, I felt compelled to speak out. Despite the senseless murder of my mom, despite the shooting at Reynolds High School that occurred last summer, and despite the everyday incidents of gun violence in our state that don't even make the headlines, Oregon lawmakers have failed to step up and fix problems in our state gun laws. That is an embarrassment, and it's time for a change.

There are common sense solutions to prevent gun violence that do not infringe on the rights of law abiding gun owners. While no single change or law will eliminate every act of gun violence, there are proven, common-sense measures we can take to protect our families and make our communities safer.

Why is it that here in Oregon, we don't require criminal background checks when people buy guns from strangers they meet online. Frankly, it's absurd that we are even debating this. Senate Bill 941 closes the dangerous loophole in our background checks system, ensuring that every gun purchaser undergoes a simple background check. This law will prevent convicted felons, domestic violence abusers, rapists, murderers and the dangerously mentally ill from getting their hands on a gun. These are people that should never have a gun. These are the people who would do harm to themselves and others.

Each day in America, 88 people are killed by guns. Like you, I would have never imagined that my mom would become one of them. But now, that is my reality — and tragically, it is the reality for a growing number of Americans: This is unacceptable. I hope that by sharing my personal story with you, I can prevent other families from having to sit here and tell you how their lives have been torn apart by gun violence. In my mother's memory I ask you to support Senate Bill 941.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions.