



Testimony in Support of SB 525 A
Senate Committee on Rules
May 12, 2015
Sarah Baessler
Oregon Nurses Association

Chair Rosenbaum and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 525 A.

The Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) supports SB 525 A which would better protect victims of domestic violence from gun violence. ONA recognizes that firearms and domestic violence are a lethal combination and believes that prohibiting possession of firearm by adjudicated domestic violence offenders is a common sense preventive measure that will save lives.

The Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) is Oregon's oldest and largest nursing union and professional association, and is proud to represent more than 13,000 registered nurses, advanced practice nurses and nursing students in Oregon. Oregon nurses make up the largest segment of Oregon's health care work force, and work in nearly every health care setting, from large hospitals to small local clinics, from corrections to school-based health centers and in public health.

Domestic violence is a public health crisis in Oregon. From 2003-2014, more than 260 Oregonians were killed as a result of domestic violence.¹ These deaths include women, men, and children, and occurred in nearly every Oregon county. Deaths include primary victims, children and family members of the victim, responding officers, colleagues, and bystanders. Sixty-plus percent of these homicides were the result of a gunshot wound.² Access to firearms by domestic abusers is a key factor in whether or not violence will be deadly, and victims are 500 percent more likely to be murdered by an abuser when a gun is present.³ Despite these compelling statistics, Oregon has no law prohibiting firearm possession by adjudicated domestic violence offenders.

Federal law has prohibited firearm possession by domestic violence offenders since the mid- 1990s, but falls short of protecting Oregon victims. Federal law is virtually unenforceable at the local level unless state statutes specifically create jurisdiction for local law enforcement. It is *local* law enforcement that responds to the vast majority of domestic violence calls in our communities, and it is

¹ Oregon Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team, 2014 Report to Legislature

Chloe Massarello, "Fatal Domestic Violence in Oregon: Demographics Related to Victims, Perpetrators, and Incidents, 2013 Report," Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (2014);

² Shen X., Millet L., "Homicide Trends and Characteristics in Oregon, 2014 Report," Oregon Health Authority, Portland, Oregon.

³ J.C. Campbell and others, "Risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships: results from a multisite case control study," American Journal of Public Health 93 (7) (2003): 1089-1097.

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essential that they have jurisdiction to protect victims. In addition, federal law does not protect victims of dating violence. US Department of Justice data shows that the share of domestic violence homicides committed by dating partners has been rising for three decades, and dating partners now commit more homicides than do spouses.

Domestic violence continues to plague our state, and domestic violence fatalities involving guns occur with alarming regularity. There is evidence that state laws restricting access to guns by domestic violence offenders are associated with a significant reduction in the number of intimate partner homicides. More than 40 states have taken steps to address this issue at the local level, and ONA urges you to support this important legislation.

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