May 29, 2015
House Judiciary Committee
Support for SB 525B

Chair Barker, Co-Chairs Olson and Williamson, and Members of the Committee:

I am Chloe Massarello of the Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, an organization that represents community domestic and sexual violence programs across the state. I am writing to express my support for SB 525B, which would codify in Oregon law the federal firearms prohibitions applicable to adjudicated domestic violence offenders.

It is well documented that firearms and domestic violence are a dangerous combination. As a member of the Oregon Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team and the coordinator responsible for tracking domestic violence-related deaths for the Coalition, I see this dynamic repeated throughout the year, every year. In 2014 alone there were over 40 deaths due to domestic violence in Oregon. On average, more than 60% of domestic violence fatalities per year are perpetrated with a firearm.

Federal law has long prohibited possession of firearms by domestic violence perpetrators subject to a restraining order that has been upheld after a hearing, or who have been convicted of a misdemeanor domestic violence offense. These processes are critical points of intervention for victims. But without a parallel state law, enforcement and implementation of these protections is virtually impossible.

Oregon should join other states in taking steps to ensure the safety of victims of this pervasive form of violence. Passage of SB 525B will ensure that Oregon law enforcement agencies and district attorneys will have important tools to protect vulnerable victims from lethal domestic violence. Studies show that local implementation of these protections helps to reduce domestic violence fatalities.

On behalf of the Coalition and community programs across the state, I urge your support of this important bill to protect victims, their children, and our communities.

Thank you for your service.

Sincerely,

Chloe Massarello
Research and Publications Coordinator