

June 1, 2015

House Judiciary Committee
Support for SB 525B

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

I am writing as a longtime Advocate for survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Over the last 17 years I have supported survivors and their children seek safety from domestic violence, and currently work at West Women's and Children's Shelter in Portland, OR where we house up to 60 women and children on any given day. On countless occasions survivors have told me how they were kept in fear by their abusers access to weapons and ongoing threats of violence towards them and their family and friends. Regardless if a protection order is granted or not there is a continued threat of escalated violence based on their access to weapons and potential for lethality.

If we want to support survivors and their children to be safe we must pass 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. There are approximately 28 deaths due to domestic violence every year in Oregon, and more than 60% of those fatalities are by gun. With the passage of SB 525B we will have one more tool for keeping weapons out of the hands of violent offenders and protecting survivors and their children.

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 convicted of a misdemeanor domestic violence offense. 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 our most vulnerable citizens. 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 fatalities.

We urge your support of this important bill to protect victims, their children, and our communities. Thank you for your time and service.

With Gratitude,
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