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We believe that everyone deserves to live a life free from violence.

House Judiciary Committee
Support for SB 525B

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

My name is Emmy Ritter and I am Director of Programs and Services of Raphael House of Portland. We are a multi-faceted domestic violence agency dedicated to fighting the causes and effects of intimate partner violence. We offer an emergency shelter in a confidential location, a housing program and follow-up services to families escaping domestic violence. 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. There are approximately 28 deaths due to domestic violence every year in Oregon, and more than 60% of those fatalities are by gun. The majority of the women who have come through our shelter report that the abusive partner has access to guns and that they have been threatened directly as well as indirectly with a gun more than once.

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 domestic violence fatalities.

We urge your support of this important bill to protect victims, their children, and our communities.

Thank you for your service.

Sincerely,

Emmy R Ritter
Director of Program and Services