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

June 1, 2015

House Judiciary Committee

Support for SB 525B

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

My name is Ana Gonzalez and I am a survivor of childhood domestic violence and advocate at Raphael House of Portland. Our agency supports women and children who are fleeing domestic violence and need a confidential location until they can safely resume a life free from 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. Not only do perpetrators have the capacity to take someone's life with a firearm, they use this weapon as a psychologically debilitating fear tactic. This perpetrator may never pull the trigger, however each and every experience of roulette, control or threats with a firearm will chip away at a survivor's mental and physical health. Each and every time a survivor's life is threatened with a firearm their brain chemistry changes. PTSD can set in with only ONE life threatening experience. Imagine what is happening over time. Their blood pressure is difficult to regulate, adrenaline is randomly dumped into their system. Memory loss sets in. All of these pieces affecting the survivor's capacity to thrive. How is that a life?

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,

Ana Gonzalez  
Facilities Coordinator/Advocate  
Raphael House of Portland  
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