

Dear Senate Judiciary Committee Members:

My name is Heather Jarrow, and I live in Portland, Oregon. I'm writing to ask you to support SB 797 during your April 17, 2017 meeting.

As an active citizen and voter in Portland, I'm concerned by the increase in gun violence across the country. In light of disturbing trends, it's critically important for our community to take informed and proactive steps to protect our citizens.

As a part-time teacher with Multnomah County Public Library in Portland Public Schools, I'm particularly concerned about the consequences of gun violence that affect our youngest citizens, those that must rely on others for protection. While I value the rights afforded to myself and others by the Second Amendment, the temporarily inconvenience this bill may pose to certain individuals is outweighed by the responsibility of protecting the public good and our community.

I'd like to share a recent, personal story that illustrates what is at risk. As a teacher in an afterschool program, I work with children of all races and socioeconomic groups throughout Multnomah County. At the start of a class in an elementary school located in the Foster-Powell neighborhood, our school went into a sudden lockdown—none of us were sure whether the threat was in or outside the school. The children were brave and resilient, but these were terrifying minutes of uncertainty. When the threat passed, we learned an armed and erratic individual had been roaming the streets outside the school.

After the feelings of fear subsided, I was overcome by a sense of violation and frustration that these circumstances have become nearly commonplace in our country. Thankfully this particular threat never entered the school, but the incident underscored to me how quickly and easily gun violence can affect even those who are mere bystanders. These children (and the families that entrust them to our care) deserve to feel safe, so they can be free to learn, develop, and thrive with their peers. While educators have the tools to teach and care for our students, we are not positioned to prevent the threat of gun violence. It is commonsense legislation like SB797 that can and should ensure even our youngest citizens enjoy a basic level of protection and safety.

I urge you to place yourselves on the side of reason and compassion, and support SB 797.

Best,

Heather Jarrow