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To: Senate Committee on Judiciary
From: Sharon Meieran, Multnomah County Commissioner
Date: April 17, 2017
Re: Support for SB 797 & SB 868

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bills 797 and 868.

Firearms are the leading cause of violent death in Oregon and, on average, at least one Oregonian dies from firearm injury every day.¹ More people die from firearm related injuries than from motor vehicle accidents, and suicide accounts for the majority of these deaths.

As an emergency physician, I see the devastating effects of firearm violence routinely. From suicide attempts, unintentional shootings, domestic violence survivors with grave injuries, and so much more – gun violence is an epidemic. But the tragedies we see day in and day out are not inevitable, and we must stop accepting them as such.

Firearm violence is a public health issue, and we can prevent deaths and injuries with smart, targeted, public health approaches. This means looking upstream to proven interventions that reduce risk and prevent injury. Senate Bills 797 and 868 do just that, advancing specific, evidence-based strategies that will keep our communities safer.

Senate Bill 797 would better protect victims of intimate partner violence and stalking by closing loopholes in Oregon law that allow abusers to buy and possess firearms. Guns pose a particular threat in the hands of abusers,² and we can reduce this risk by taking simple, rational steps to address gaps in the law.

When it comes to mass shootings in the U.S., the majority are related to domestic or family violence, and there were often red flags in advance of these shootings indicating that the shooter posed a risk to themselves or to others.³

Senate Bill 868 would establish an Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) in Oregon, similar to laws in Washington, California and Connecticut. Friends and family are usually the first to recognize when someone they care about is in crisis, but often have no clear path to seek help in temporarily separating the people they love from their guns when they demonstrate an increased risk of danger to themselves or others. The ERPO would provide an avenue to intervene when

someone poses a clear risk of harm. Research from Connecticut shows that this kind of policy is effective in reducing gun suicides.⁴ With one of the highest suicide rates in the nation,⁵ it is clear that we can and must do more here in Oregon to stem this persistent and preventable tragedy.

I strongly urge you to support Senate Bills 797 and 868.

Respectfully submitted,



Sharon Meieran

¹ Oregon Health Authority, 2016

² Campbell, J.C., et al. (2003). Risk Factors for Femicide in Abusive Relationships: Results from a Multisite Case Control Study. *American Journal of Public Health* (93).

³ Everytown for Gun Safety (2017). Mass Shootings in the United States: 2009-2016.

<https://everytownresearch.org/reports/mass-shootings-analysis/>

⁴ Swanson, J.W., et al. (2016). Implementation and Effectiveness of Connecticut's Risk-Based Gun Removal Law: Does it Prevent Suicides? *Law and Contemporary Problems*.

⁵ Shen X., Millet L. (2016). Suicides in Oregon: Trends and Associated Factors. 2003-2012. *Oregon Health Authority*.