



SB 797 and SB 868

Senate Committee on Judiciary Public Hearing

Testimony of Michelle Ganow-Jones, Executive Director, Oregon NOW

March 17, 2017

Chair Prozanski and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Michelle Ganow-Jones and I am pleased to be here today on behalf of local chapters and members of the National Organization for Women (NOW) from across Oregon. We urge Oregon legislators to act upon this opportunity to implement common sense gun violence prevention legislation that will save women's lives. SB 797 and SB 868 each address critical aspects of the nexus between guns and domestic abuse.

SB 797 closes dangerous loopholes in our background check laws. Over 90% of firearm background checks are completed within minutes, but some take longer. Under current law, a seller is permitted to sell the gun - even if the check is not complete - after three business days. This frequently is referred to as the Charleston loophole, named for the murders that took place in Charleston, SC, when Dylann Roof was allowed to buy a gun under exactly these circumstances. SB 797 also keeps guns out of the hands of domestic abusers by closing the so-called "boyfriend/girlfriend" loophole. We know that the point at which a victim of domestic violence leaves an abusive relationship is when they are most at risk of further violence and even death from their abuser. Oregon has taken good steps to restrict firearm privileges for domestic partners who are convicted of violent crimes, but those laws are restricted to those who are married or co-parents. SB 797 would empower the protective order process to prohibit the possession of firearms in all forms of domestic relationships.

We also urge your support for SB 868, which makes it possible for families and law enforcement to take action to intervene and limit a person's access to firearms when they're demonstrating signs of a serious crisis. An Extreme Risk Protection Order saves lives while ensuring all parties receive due process. In too many cases, we hear after the fact that there were warning signs before an act of gun violence took place, and we ask ourselves what we could have done to prevent tragedy. Here's something we can do. Current Oregon law lacks the necessary tools to temporarily remove firearms from people in crisis who clearly demonstrate that they are a danger to themselves and others. By establishing Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPO), SB 868 empowers families and law enforcement to prevent gun tragedies and save lives, decreasing the risk of gun violence and also helping people to seek care to address the underlying reasons that put them at risk for gun violence.

We hope that you will join us in supporting SB 797 and SB 868. We must end the epidemic of gun violence in our society, and these two bills are critical steps toward ensuring women's safety. Thank you.