



## **Senate Committee on Judiciary**

Allison Seymour  
April 17, 2017

Chairs Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony during this committee meeting. My name is Allison Seymour. I am a registered nurse and my professional practice is medical telemetry care at Salem Health. I am here today on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association- representing over 14,000 members registered nurses working throughout our state's health care system.

I am here in support of SB 797 and SB 868 and the two amendments for SB 764.

As a nurse I often encounter patients in distressing situations.

Many of us in this room have been affected by the high suicide rates in this country. Personally I have lost family and friends to suicide. As a nurse I am trained to assess for suicidal ideation and suicide warning signs. I have also cared for patients after tragic suicide attempts.

According to the CDC in 2014, suicide was 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of adult deaths. Of all males, suicide rates are highest among men aged 75 and over, and men aged 45–64 had the second-highest suicide rate. Of all females suicide rates are the highest among women aged 45-64. In addition suicide is a veteran health issue accounting for 22% of suicides.

This directly pertains to my patient population.

A couple of months ago I was taking care of an elderly man being treated for complications of diabetes. He was discouraged that his chronic illnesses had led to disability. He told me that he had a gun at home and had thought about using it before he came into the hospital. After I spoke with the family they said they would remove the gun from the house to be safe. This really struck me as a pivotal point of preventing a suicide attempt.

I advocate for SB 868 as a tool to help prevent suicides. In 2014, 55.4% of male adult suicides and 31% of female suicides and 66% of veteran suicides were the result of firearm injury. The extreme risk protection order could temporarily remove firearms from people in crisis that show clear evidence that they are a danger to themselves and others. I would like to stress that this would require a court order. I have been to court proceedings for involuntary psychiatric holds and these proceedings are not taken lightly and aim to ensure that the individual's rights are respected. The extreme risk protection order can help save lives just as it has been proved to do in California, Indiana and Connecticut.

As a nurse I have a moral obligation to promote, advocate for, and protect the rights, health and safety of patients, and the community.

This is why I sit before you in support of legislation that supports effective use of criminal background checks, and closes existing loopholes in Oregon gun laws. Criminal background checks stop thousands of convicted felons, domestic abusers, and other dangerous people from buying guns each year. But law enforcement must have enough time to complete the criminal background checks before the gun sales proceed and be alerted when prohibited people try to buy a gun and fail the background check.

As a registered nurse, I strongly urge you to take action now to help protect our community. Thank you again for allowing me to provide testimony.