

Testimony in Support of SB 978

Good morning Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. My name is Talia Wexler, I live in Northeast Portland, and I am an eighth grader at Northwest Academy. I am a member of Students Demand Action for Gun Sense, an arm of the Everytown for Gun Safety Coalition. I am here in support of the -1 amendment to SB 978 because the safety of the members of our community is a priority, and responsible storage saves lives.

Today, I will be specifically addressing the portion of this bill that enforces safe storage. Children are incapable of grasping the significant danger of a gun. An irresponsibly stored weapon in the home, especially one with children present, could easily transform something intended to protect your home into the cause of somebody's death. Approximately 4.6 million children live in a household with at least one gun that is stored loaded and unlocked. Many states have already passed laws mandating that owners responsibly store their firearms, and we should follow their lead. The step of enforcing responsible storage, and therefore enforcing responsible gun ownership, is not precautionary—it is an immediate need for the safety of Oregonians.

I joined Students Demand Action for Gun Sense because of the fear I feel in my classroom, the fear I feel in shopping malls, the fear I feel when I visit a home without knowing whether or not there is an irresponsibly stored gun, and because I knew my peers felt the same burdening fear. This legislation not only has the power to lessen these fears, but to lessen the reasons for having them. If we can place a major boundary between a child and a dangerous weapon that they may view as a toy, between a suicidal teen and a weapon that could end their lives, or between a gunman such as the one from the Clackamas Town Center shooting who killed Cindy Yuille and Steven Forsyth—valued members of our community—why would we not choose to enact this?

Requiring responsible storage of a gun in a gun safe or with a gun lock does not interfere with the rights of a gun owner to own a weapon. A gun safe can be opened within seconds but can still protect against access by children or prohibited people. It can intervene with the unlawful use of that weapon, which protects the rights of all Oregonians.

Thank you for your time.