

Testimony in support of SB 978

Good morning Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. My name is Amie Wexler and I am here to testify in favor of the -1 amendment to SB 978, which would grant much needed protections to Oregonians.

I am a member of the Oregon chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America and have been since the shooting at Umpqua Community College in October 2015. I am also a lawyer and member of the Oregon State Bar.

I want to address two specific parts of this robust proposal. First, the provision to allow dealers and businesses to raise the age at which someone can purchase a firearm. We all understand that there are instances where we choose to limit access based on age, such as the age to legally drink, use marijuana, or smoke cigarettes. In fact, federal law already requires a person be 21 years old to buy a handgun from a federally licensed firearms dealer. This proposal would allow Oregon firearm dealers to set common sense age restrictions if they want to go above and beyond the current law and not sell firearms to those under 21 years old. Given what we know about brain development and brain science, the decision-making centers of the brain are not finished developing into one's 20's. If a gun seller wants to acknowledge that brain science and refuse to sell weapons to those under 21, they should have the discretion to do so.

Second, I would like to address the responsible storage aspects of the bill. As mentioned already, we know that brain development in teens causes them to act with greater impulsivity and without the ability to fully realize the consequences of their actions. If they have easy access to an adult's gun, they are more likely to take action on suicidal thoughts, with deadly results, as 85% of suicide attempts with a firearm are successful, compared to only 5% by other means. Firearm suicide claims the life of over 1,000 children and teens each year in this country, with over 80% using a gun owned by a family member. Survivors of suicide attempts report only 10 minutes of thought between the idea and taking action. By putting stumbling blocks like gun safes and gun locks between the suicidal person and the weapon, we can reduce their access to this deadly means of suicide and get people the help they need.

Thank you for your time.