

I want to thank you for your time in considering written testimony on Senate Bill 978 currently before the Committee. The safety of Oregonians and the preservation of freedoms of law abiding individuals is central to maintaining a strong and functioning society.

Senate Bill 978, and the amendments filed, do little in the way of advancing safety of Oregonians. Instead, “feel good” measures are being potentially codified that places onerous duties upon the legal gun owners. SB978 is woefully ignorant in recognizing that “bad actors” exist in society whom do not follow existing laws nor will they follow future laws. SB978 does nothing to address root causes of societal stressors which may result in violence and suicides.

SB978 proposal to allow businesses to not sale firearms and ammunition to 18, 19, and 20-year-olds discriminates against individuals who have done nothing legally to violate their firearms rights other than being of an age that the legislature has determined them to be not responsible enough to purchase firearms and ammunition. This arbitrary determination of responsibility stands in stark contrast to the other responsibilities that these same 18, 19, and 20-year-olds can take take on. These individuals may join the military, are free to contract, may take on hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt, may make sole health determinations, and may be raising children of their own. Oregon’s Governor and members of the State Legislature are on record that 16-year-olds are responsible and competent enough to vote on measures which may change the State Constitution and appropriate public funds. However, with SB978, a 20 year old with a job, who pays taxes, who has a family, and who has a home mortgage may not be allowed to buy a hunting rifle or

box of ammunition. While there is no true method to determine if that same 20-year-old is responsible enough to own a firearm; it is hypocritical to assume that he or she is not responsible when they have been assumed to be responsible for similar or greater responsibilities.

SB978's proposal for firearms to be locked and inaccessible at all times ignores the fundamental factor that bad actors are present in society who do not follow existing or proposed laws. For many, a primary factor in purchasing and possessing a firearm is in protection of home and family. Under SB978, having a firearm accessible on a night stand, which is not locked, would be a criminal offense and place the gun owner at further liability. The necessity of having a readily accessible and usable firearm is predicated on the reasonable assumption that bad actors whom break into homes are there to do harm and have weapons of their own. This is a life or death situation where the home owner has now become the prey. The bad actors are at an advantage because they have chosen a time and method for carrying out harm leaving the unsuspecting home owner to scramble at 3AM to determine how best to protect the life of their family. This is not a time to be fumbling with gun locks or safe combinations. It is a time for quick and decisive action. Forcing gun owners to have their firearms inaccessible in their own home further shifts the advantage to bad actors whom would not only be able to choose a time and method of harm but also be assured that the law following gun owners are incapable of defending themselves. Bad actors who are willing to commit felonies to break into someone's home are not going to have their guns locked or leave them at home in a safe. It is frankly asinine to codify a scenario with which gun owners must choose

between being in compliance with the law or being able to protect their family adequately from those that disregard laws.

SB978s provisions prohibiting firearms in public buildings further ignores the idea that bad actors who disregard laws exist. "Gun free zones" have been shown time and time again to be no deterrent. Since 1990, schools have been federally protected under the Gun Free School Zone Act and yet, tragically, school shootings occur. Gun free zones also exist for Post Offices and yet "going postal" is part of the American lexicon. Creating new areas for firearms to be prohibited will be as completely ineffective as every other attempt has been in creating a "gun free zone". It is an ineffectual concept that is fantasy at best. A legal concealed carry holder in the State of Oregon should be allowed to carry a firearm in any and all places with which harm may find them. It is far too onerous to expect a legal concealed carry holder to navigate a patchwork of rules which may be set by municipalities, airports, hospitals, and universities on which public buildings firearms may or may not be allowed in.

For consideration for the Committee of new amendments which may be proposed: Leave the low hanging fruit of gun control and magazine limits alone. The only thing it does is punish and restricts the freedom of the vast majority of legal gun owners who commit no crimes and use guns as a tool for food, protection, and hobby.

The goal of curbing mass shootings, gang/drug violence, domestic assaults, and suicides is a worthy and honorable cause. To do this, it is necessary to focus on the root causes of these issues and understand what is driving them and address those issues first. Societal stressors and mental health are the drivers of violence in communities. Not guns,

not the magazine that holds more than 5, 7, 10-rounds (or whatever arbitrary number that is most en vogue), not the pistol grip nor the foregrip that makes holding a gun easier, not the muzzle compensator, and not any other easily legislated “scary” features.

Making gun legislation a priority does nothing to make Oregon better or safer. I support making Oregon safer by addressing the real and pervasive short comings in the societal safety net. If wage stagnation, universal basic income, housing shortages, universal health care, on-demand mental health and addiction treatment, environmental pollutants, and the lagging education system all get solved and gun crimes are increasing then it would be a time to study and address guns. However, until those harder conversations are had about why crimes, violence, and suicides occur focusing on guns is the laziest path with the least amount results for viable problem solving.

Thank you,
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