

To:

HJUD Exhibits

Subject:

Support SB 978 to keep Oregonians Safe from Guns

Date:

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I am submitting written testimony in support of Senate Bill 978, an omnibus bill to ensure: safe storage of firearms with civil penalties; require tracking of firearms; require firearm injury reporting to the OHA; allow local authorities to regular guns in public buildings; all gun sellers to restrict sales to those over 21 without facing discrimination; and increase concealed handgun license fees which should help the State with much needed revenue to carry out the new law.

While each of these provisions is important, safe storage will save the most lives in Oregon. Suicide is 82-84% of all gun deaths in Oregon. Numerous research shows that having a gun in the home and access to a gun increases the rate of suicide.

- People who live in U.S. states with high rates of household gun ownership are almost four times more likely to die by gun suicide than in states where fewer households own guns. This relationship remains strong even when controlling for other factors associated with suicide, like poverty, unemployment, serious mental illness, and substance abuse.
- A meta-analysis of 14 different scientific studies concluded that having access to a firearm triples one's risk of death by suicide. This elevated risk applies not only to the gun owner, but everyone in the household.

About half of all suicides in the US use a firearm; Teen suicide has increased 61% in the past ten years and in an increasing percentage of overall suicides committed. Suicides among all populations and gun deaths in general have increased every year since at least 2014. Since many suicides are impulsive, keeping guns locked and stored will reduce the number of suicides; indeed, safe storage laws are known to reduce deaths 14-16% after legislation is passed. This link to a NYT article by Oregonian Nicholas Kristof graphically demonstrates the link between gun legislation and gun death: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/11/06/opinion/how-to-reduce-shootings.html>. Safe storage provisions will also reduce accidental shootings and prevent kids from playing around with guns.

Tracking of firearms will provide support for law enforcement to trace guns to their owners and help prevent gun trafficking. Reporting the loss of a gun will also save lives; Had the owner of the gun used in the Clackamas TownCenter shooting 6 years ago reported the gun missing, the lives of Cindy Yuile and Steve Forsythe may have been saved and their families spared the grief of losing them.

Gun dealers should have the right to not sell guns to those under 21. When Dick's Sporting Goods and other retailers led the way after the Parkland Shooting by selling only to those over 21, their intent was to be responsible in selling a deadly weapon; Instead they were sued for discrimination.

I want to point out that all of these measures work to provide balance between gun ownership and gun liability and that none of these measures take away the right to own a gun. Guns are deadlier than most other items we regulate in the state. And while gun advocates will highlight their protective qualities, guns are also used to intimidate, kill and injure many. I know the gun lobby has been successful in intimidating elected officials to look away from rising gun

violence in the name of “freedom.”

In 2018, almost 40,000 people in the US lost their lives to a gun, the highest number ever in US history. Passage of SB 978 will still allow those who like guns to still have them; asking gun owners to keep them stored, to communicate their whereabouts and allow local authorities to limit where they can be is sensible. Components of this bill, when passed in other states, have shown a decrease in gun deaths. I encourage the Committee to fully pass of all provisions and bring SB 978 to a floor vote.

Thank you for your time in reading this. I wish you well.

Jill Punches  
Portland, OR

Sent from my iPad