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TO: Senate Committee on Judiciary

FR: Jan Elfers, President
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
0245 SW Bancroft Street, Suite B, Portland Oregon 97239

DA: April 2, 2019

RE: Support for SB 978-1, omnibus bill amendment, related to gun violence

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

My name is Jan Elfers. I am testifying in support of SB 978-1 and its provisions to reduce gun violence in our state.

I am the President of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) is a statewide association of Christian denominations, congregations, ecumenical organizations and interfaith partners working together to improve the lives of Oregonians through community ministry programs, ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue, public policy advocacy and climate justice work.

I am here to share why Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon supports gun violence prevention.

EMO works to build bridges across the walls that divide us. We seek to heal communities after harm – and to prevent harm and preserve health whenever we can.

Gun deaths are often preventable, and it is our responsibility to take common sense steps to reduce gun deaths. For this reason, we are grateful for the committee's consideration of the omnibus bill amendment that proposes several sensible measures to reduce gun violence. In particular, we support safe storage of weapons, reasonable age restrictions and a store's right to not sell firearms to those under 21, reporting of firearm injuries, and the restriction on the manufacture of untraceable guns.

There is more work to be done, beyond the measures in this bill, but these are important steps for this body to take this legislative session.

We know that gun violence on the level we face is a public health crisis, and a uniquely American problem. Let us be inspired by the boldness of our sisters and brothers in New Zealand, and recognize that when any of our neighbors are at risk, we are called to act.

In the debate about gun laws, there is too often a spirit of fear. But fear sows mistrust and turns us against our neighbors. As people of faith, we instead yearn for a community that is safe for all. Whether from suicide, murder, or accidents, guns take too many lives. Not every gun death is preventable, but every life lost to gun violence is mourned. Let us do what we can to save lives and leave a safer state for our children.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our testimony. I ask your support for the amendment SB 978-1, and I urge the Committee to move this bill forward.