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Salem, Oregon

March 31, 2019

Senate Judiciary Committee
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

To Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee regarding SB 978:

I believe the recent gun bills in the Legislature this year reflect an honest and well-meant desire to reduce gun deaths and violence, a motive I respect. However I feel the method is faulty and will result in more harm than good.

As a medical professional I am accustomed to viewing all actions in the light of risks versus benefits. Sometimes treatments or procedures have significant risks of injury and harm, and are not to be used except under the rare circumstances when those risks are outweighed by the likelihood they will cure some disease or condition. Other treatments, like using vitamin C for instance, have very little risk and are safe to be used even when they may not cause any appreciable benefit. I urge you to consider gun control using the same logic.

GUN FREE ZONES

SB 978 has a provision to allow local authorities to specify buildings or zones where the carrying of firearms is prohibited. The stated benefit is to allow locals to create areas in which they would feel safer and prevent injury due to accidental firearm discharge. Accidental injuries are a minority and do not account for a significant portion of gun violence. On the other hand, the old adage still applies: "Criminals, by definition, don't obey laws." Without walls, fences and law enforcement screening entrants with metal detectors, 'gun-free' buildings or areas will not be appreciably any safer because anyone with ill-intent can walk in and start shooting. Remember the Colorado theater shooting? The Regal theater where it occurred already prohibited the carrying of firearms. Little good that was to the victims. Importantly, as each city or local authority creates a mish-mash of 'gun free zones' that become harder and harder to keep track of, law abiding citizens that carry handguns for self-defense become more and more likely to become accidental criminals.

I agree with many Democrats that the creation of gun-free zones will not create areas that criminals will flock to intending to inflict harm on the unarmed. It is likely true that those who wish to do harm will inflict it based on their motives, not on the existence of gun-free zones. But the existence of gun-free zones will also do nothing to stop them if they do wish to inflict harm, so it provides little, if any benefit. More gun-free zones will inflict harm and criminality on law-abiding citizens that accidentally disobey the law. For this reason the creation of gun-free zones has very little benefit but significant risk of harm to otherwise law-abiding women and men. In my field, the answer for such a treatment is clear: not indicated and unsafe.

SAFE STORAGE PROVISION

My argument against the safe storage provision is similar to the above argument about gun-free zones. Creating storage requirements does little to actually prevent harm because even many gun safes and locks can be easily defeated by criminals with intent. Instead, it creates a new class of criminal: gun-theft victims become criminals, a terribly ironic form of victim-blaming. Worse, it restricts people's ability to lawfully defend themselves from those very criminals. Guns used for self-defense must be quick to access or their usefulness is neutralized. A safe storage provision limits the users' ability to access them quickly, increasing their risk of becoming a victim. In summary, then, the benefit that a very few guns will be prevented from falling into the wrong hands is easily outweighed by the risk of leaving people defenseless and making them criminals when their only crime was wishing to keep their family and property safe.

Again, I'm sure the intention behind the provisions of SB 978 are well-meaning but I urge you to consider risks of passing this bill in addition to their perceived benefits. I urge you to resist its passage using your intelligence and logic, knowing that SB 978 will create more harm than good. Vote 'no'.

With Sincerest Regards,



Michael Robinson

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