



**Testimony Supporting HB 2013A
Senate Judiciary Committee
May 15th, 2019**

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the committee,

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center, (OLC) I submit this testimony in support of HB 2013A, which would provide safety for victims of domestic violence by keeping guns out of the hands of abusers.

OLC's mission is to achieve justice for low-income vulnerable populations. A significant number of our clients come to us for help as they are struggling to escape or recover from domestic violence. Domestic and sexual violence are serious public health and safety issues in our state. Victims and their children suffer great psychological, emotional, and physical trauma, which have long term impact on their lives. These issues greatly contribute to the vulnerability of our clients, and further trap them in poverty and crisis. All too often, domestic violence can be lethal. OLC is committed to supporting the coordinated community response necessary to help prevent this violence, and to help victims in crisis move towards the safety and stability they need for recovery.

Oregon has seen reduced crime rates as a whole, yet according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, our reported rates of violence against women are among the highest in the nation.¹ Across Oregon, 50% of all women and 17% of all men have experienced sexual violence. And each year, a shocking number of Oregonians are killed as a result of domestic violence.

Domestic violence and firearms are a lethal combination. Domestic violence accounts for one in four of all Oregon violent deaths. Every year, *on average*, twenty-nine Oregonians are killed in domestic violence incidents. In 2017 alone, 32 people died due to domestic violence.² From 2003-2014, a total of **321** lives were lost. These deaths include women, men, and children, and occurred in 31 of 36 counties. Deaths include primary victims, children and family members of the victim, responding officers, colleagues, and bystanders. Perpetrators also die, most commonly of self-inflicted gunshot wounds. The majority (approximately 66%) of domestic violence deaths are by firearm.³ Many studies show that when firearms are in the hands of domestic violence abusers, there is a significantly greater danger of serious injury or death. Domestic violence assaults with firearms are 12x more likely to end in a fatality. The impact of these fatalities reverberates through our communities.

¹ <https://www.opb.org/news/article/sexual-assault-high-rate-oregon-women-girls-report/>

² <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2018R1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/141641>

³ Oregon Violent Death Reporting System Data Dashboard
<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/diseasesconditions/injuryfatalitydata/pages/nvdrs.aspx>,
<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/diseasesconditions/injuryfatalitydata/pages/nvdrs.aspx>

In recognition of this lethal connection, Oregon law prohibits convicted abusers and stalkers, as well as abusers subject to certain types of restraining orders, from having guns. Under current state law, perpetrators are prohibited from having guns if they are subject to a final order of protection or are convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence or stalking. This important protection ensures that abusers attempting to purchase a weapon will fail a background check, but it does not address the situation in which a perpetrator possessed weapons prior to the dis-qualifying event. In addition, current law does not apply to protection orders that become final orders after the expiration of the time period in which a hearing can be requested. This leaves a significant % of victims without necessary protection from firearm abuse.

It is time for Oregon to act to protect victims and ensure that prohibited possessors are in fact relinquishing firearms. HB 2013A will ensure that protocols and procedures are in place to remove firearms from those who are prohibited from possessing them. The bill provides reasonable timelines and practical provisions designed to implement current policies codified in Oregon law. Enactment of this bill will provide greater safety for Oregonians – states that have implemented similar relinquishment procedures have seen a 14% reduction in intimate partner firearm homicides.⁴ One study found a 19% reduction in risk.⁵

Domestic violence continues to plague our state, and domestic violence fatalities perpetrated by offenders using firearms occur with alarming regularity. I urge you to pass HB 2013A in order to prioritize the response to domestic violence and provide the criminal justice system with the tools it needs to limit perpetrator access to firearms and reduce tragic deaths.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

⁴ Siegel, M., Diez, C., et al. (2017). State Intimate Partner Violence-Related Firearm Laws and Intimate-Partners Homicide Rates in the United States, 1991-2015. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 167(8), 536-543.

⁵ April M. Zeoli & Daniel W. Webster, Effects of Domestic Violence Policies, Alcohol Taxes, and Police Staffing Levels on Intimate Partner Homicide in Large US Cities, 16 *Inj. Prev.* 90 (2010). See also Elizabeth R. Vigdor & James A. Mercy, Do Laws Restricting Access to Firearms by Domestic Violence Offenders Prevent Intimate Partner Homicide?, 30 *Evaluation Rev.* 313, 332 (June 2006)