

TO: House Committee on Judiciary
FROM: Carol Greenough, Tualatin
SUBJECT: Support for HB 4005

Dear Chair Sanchez and members of the committee,

I was a middle school psychologist when the school shooting happened at Columbine. I remember the shock we all felt. We had to create a response to this because we had not encountered gun violence at this level before. Students were devastated. This incident seemed to open a new era for young people, using gun violence to make a statement.

A little later when a former classmate committed suicide, students were even more upset. It is impossible to describe how such a loss affects a school community.

The Healthy Teens Survey is administered through many of our schools every two years. I will summarize some of the most concerning Oregon data:

Approximately 19% of our 8th and 11th graders report that they have seriously considered committing suicide in the past year. Stop and think, in a class of 30 students that is 6 students. (1)

Asked if they have actually attempted suicide, 10% of our 8th graders and 7.4% of our 11th graders said yes. Again, stop and think - one out of ten eighth grade students has actually attempted suicide. (1)

And these are the students who survived suicidal thoughts or attempts. With access to a gun many of them would be dead. We also see it is easy for students to get a gun. More than 40% of all students said it would take them less than 24 hours to get and be ready to fire a loaded gun. (1)

Finally, nationwide, 82% of youth shooting-related suicides involve a firearm owned by a family member. (2)

Until you sit with children who have lost a friend, family members who have lost a child, or a whole group of students who live with fear and despair, it may be possible to say that locking up guns takes away rights. But, safe storage saves lives. Coupled with education to make sure that families safeguard their children from gun violence, these statistics can change for the better. Please support HB 4005.

Thank you,

Carol Greenough, Ph.D.

References

- (1). <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/BIRTHDEATHCERTIFICATES/SURVEYS/OREGONHEALTHYTEENS/Documents/2019/2019%20State%20of%20Oregon%20Profile%20Report.pdf>
- (2). <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/youth-access/>
- (3) <https://www.thelundreport.org/content/legislature-passes-bill-aimed-preventing-youth-suicide>
- (4) <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/DiseasesConditions/InjuryFatalityData/Documents/Fact%20Sheets/suicide-youth-2015v2.pdf>