



March 24, 2021

Dear Chair Smith Warner and Members of the Committee,

For the record, our names are Kathleen Carlson, MS, PhD and Ben Hoffman, MD. We are gun violence prevention researchers, educators, and advocates who are members of the Gun Violence as a Public Health Issue (GVPHI) Initiative, a cross-institutional effort at Oregon Health and Science University and Portland State University (OHSU-PSU) consisting of a large group of faculty, researchers, students, healthcare professionals, and community members devoted to using the tools of Public Health to reduce the toll of firearm injuries in Oregon. We urge your support of HB2337.

Gun violence is a racial justice issue

Gun homicide disproportionately affects Oregon's communities of color --- specifically, Black Oregonians who have been economically, socially, and geographically marginalized for many decades, and Oregon's American Indian/Alaska Native communities, who have been similarly marginalized for centuries. **It's a brutal history of racism that still exists today and that drives the inequality and the conditions that lead to gun violence.**

In the last 10 years in Oregon, rates of firearm homicide, including those involving law enforcement, were approximately 150% higher for Oregonians identified as American-Indian/Alaskan Natives, and approximately 450% higher for Oregonians identified as Black/African-Americans.¹ While Black/African-American people make up only 5.7% of Portland's population, 50.8% of the victims and suspects of shootings in Portland are Black or

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [Online].(2021) [cited 2021 March 23] Available from: www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars

African American.² The hurt of gun violence extends beyond victims and suspects and has a devastating impact on entire communities, affecting many generations to come.

Also, legal intervention deaths, many times the result of a police shooting, disproportionately affect people of color. Nationally, in 2016, Black and Native American individuals were more than two and three times (respectively) as likely to be killed by law enforcement as White individuals.³ This continues to occur because of oppressive and systemic inequities and it too, must be addressed as a racial justice issue.

HB2337 includes important strategies toward fostering a more just and equitable Oregon that can reduce and prevent gun violence.

The GVPHI Initiative promotes and works to implement public health solutions that are science-based, prevention-focused, and multi-level. They are rooted in equity and social justice and promote systems-level change. We commend you for considering such a forward-looking bill to address the injustices of the past -- and the present. We support HB2337 as a public health measure. It invests in a future that, by centering Oregon's communities of color, can create equitable conditions that can lead to the reduction and prevention of gun violence.

² National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform. *The Cost of Gun Violence in the City of Portland*. January 2020. Available from: <https://www.portland.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/portland-cost-of-violence-report-jan-2020.pdf>

³ American Public Health Association. *Addressing Law Enforcement Violence as a Public Health Issue*. Nov. 13, 2018. Available from: [Addressing Law Enforcement Violence as a Public Health Issue \(apha.org\)](https://www.apha.org/press-releases/2018/11/13/addressing-law-enforcement-violence-as-a-public-health-issue).