

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

My name is Maria Faria, and I am submitting this testimony to urge you to **support SB 554**, which would allow cities, counties, schools, and other public entities to prohibit guns in their buildings and on their property.

This bill matters to me personally. My daughter works at the Capitol building, as you do, and she shouldn't be exposed to armed intimidation or worry that someone next to her has a gun. And when I come to Salem for legislator meetings and committee hearings, I too, shouldn't be intimidated by displays of firepower, or worried about risks posed by concealed loaded guns around me.

But my support to SB 554 is not limited to my own and my daughters' safety at the Capitol building. Authorizing school districts, Colleges, Universities and other entities to develop policies limiting the possession of firearms in their public buildings is a step to make these buildings safer for the whole community.

This bill doesn't force localities to change any current policies, or implement policies they don't want to. What the bill proposes is to give local officials the power to make the public safety decisions that are right for their communities.

And policies and regulations limiting possession of firearms in specific buildings do not infringe on Second Amendment rights.

The Second Amendment is the same in all 50 states. Yet, some states allow schools to prohibit firearms, and some schools have metal detectors to detour entrance of guns. Many schools report having found and removed guns from children's backpacks, likely preventing life threatening intentional or unintentional shootings.

In Oregon K-12 schools are not allowed to prevent guns from entering school grounds. And research shows that if guns are carried into schools, children are more likely to gain access to those guns too.

To the contrary of a frequently heard statement that more gun injuries and deaths happen in places that do not allow guns, there is no evidence to support it. While some heinous and high profile shootings happened in places where citizens were unarmed, the vast majority of homicides and suicides happen in places where guns are allowed. In fact research shows that policies that force colleges to allow guns on campuses are more likely to lead to more shootings, homicides, and suicides. Moreover, there is no evidence that guns on campus prevent school mass shootings.

I have also seen arguments from those opposing this bill, suggesting that we shouldn't create a patchwork of different policies throughout the state. This argument fails to acknowledge that not all communities are equal. And it fails to acknowledge that not all entities are equal, nor are all public buildings the same. Public safety decisions can and should take in consideration the unique characteristics and needs of each place.

Courthouses already prohibit firearms in their premises *to maintain a safe and secure environment for everyone in the building*. This exemplifies that some public buildings are recognizably at higher risk than others, and require extra measure "to keep a safe and secure

environment for everyone in the building”, and that prohibiting guns is admittedly an important measure to improve safety.

During 2020 we saw an increase in armed intimidation and gun violence throughout the state and the country. Many public places have become at high risk of gun violence. And we, as a community, have the right and the responsibility to maintain a safe and secure environment for everyone in any of our buildings, not just in courthouses.

I present these arguments to urge you to **vote yes on SB 554**, and send it to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

With due respect,

Maria Faria

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.courts.oregon.gov/courts/clackamas/go/Pages/security.aspx>