

February 2, 2022

Dear Chair Prusak 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 HB4052.

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 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 African American.²

In addition, 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

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [Online].(2021) [cited 2022 February 2] Available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html>.

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>.

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.

The hurt of gun violence extends beyond victims and suspects and has a devastating impact on entire communities, affecting many generations to come. Addressing the trauma of racism will help stop the cycles of violence that result, and will help our communities heal.

HB4052 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 HB4052, a forward-looking bill that address the injustices of the past and present by increasing access to culturally and linguistically specific health care for underserved populations in Oregon and by authorizing the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office to work with communities of color to develop recommendations for funding interventions that address social and economic inequities. We support HB4052 as a public health measure that begins to address the effects of systemic racism and works towards creating the conditions that can lead to the reduction and prevention of gun violence.

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/advocacy/press-releases/2018/11/13/addressing-law-enforcement-violence-as-a-public-health-issue).