

Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and Senators Bonham, Campos, and Gorsek,

My name is Michael Smith. I am Chair of the Gun Owners Caucus of the Democratic Party of Oregon. The Caucus has asked me to present testimony in favor of SB 704, and I am honored to do so.

Part of our mission as a Caucus is to present evidence-based initiatives that reduce social harms related to firearms. As gun owners, we believe we have a responsibility to bring solutions to the table. The evidence shows that universal health care is likely to ameliorate gun-related death and injuries in many ways. To save time I will focus on the top three.

First, we believe universal health care will help reduce suicides. Our interest in this is simple: four out of five gun deaths in Oregon are suicides, according to the Oregon Health Authority. If we can tackle suicides, we can make a major difference in gun deaths. The evidence shows that universal health care would tackle suicides in two ways. First, obviously, expanding mental health services would help to reduce the suicide rate. Secondly, our research shows that just by making sure that all Oregonians *know their health and mental health needs will be provided for*, we can reduce the stressors that lead to suicidal ideation in the first place.

As for the other one out of five gun deaths, we know that shooting victims often lack health insurance that would help to save their lives.

In short, we believe that SB 704 would have a positive impact on gun related social problems, in addition to the other positive impacts that it would have on Oregonians. Therefore, we urge swift passage of SB 704, and hope that this will move Oregon quickly to high quality, comprehensive health care for all Oregonians.

Thank you very much,

Michael Smith
Chair, DPO Gun Owners Caucus

