

HB 2006

My name is Deborah Thomas. I am a retired lawyer and financial advisor, and I live in Cedar Hills, Portland. When I was 19, my older brother killed himself with a gun.

I'm urging you to support critical gun safety bills coming through your committee. 66% or more of the general public support stricter gun laws and I am pleased Oregon is proposing additional gun safety legislation. I am a member of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America and we are advocating for change.

The one most important to me today is Bill _____, a law that will raise the age for purchase and possession of semi-automatic rifles from 18 to 21. You are aware that the minimum age to buy handguns from any dealer in the US is 21. Why does Oregon have an exception for these even more dangerous weapons? It is critical that we do everything we can to prevent teenagers from buying and owning these guns. This is not a second amendment issue, it is a health care emergency.

When assault weapons are used in shootings, they result in far more deaths and injuries. The five most deadly shootings in the US all involved the use of assault weapons and/or high capacity magazines. These weapons are disproportionately used in mass public shootings – 76 percent of those involved an assault weapon. From 2009 to 2020 there were at least 30 mass shootings that involved the use of an assault weapon, resulting in 347 deaths and 719 injuries. In other words, shootings involving assault weapons accounted for 25 percent of all mass shooting deaths and 76 percent of injuries. When an assault weapon was involved, six times as many people were shot.

I'm sure you know that in 2022 there were over 600 mass shootings, and to date this year there have been at least 100. Over the past decade, we have all seen an increase in the use of semi-automatic rifles. These are not guns that have legitimate uses such as hunting or home protection, these are only weapons of war and chaos.

It is well documented that young people age 21 and younger have not reached their full maturity or intelligence. Hormones, peer pressure, bullying and domestic violence all contribute to anger issues and rash decisions. These are not people that should have access to deadly weapons of mass destruction.

In addition to Bill _____ on assault rifle age, I urge you to support Bill _____ banning ghost guns, and Bill _____ banning concealed carry access to city and county public buildings. Thank you for taking my testimony and I urge you to advance this Bill out of committee and continue to support it until it becomes law.