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OREGON STATE LEGISLATURE  
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### Testimony on House Bill 2006

March 22, 2023

Chair Kropf, Vice-Chair Wallan, Vice-Chair Andersen, and Members of the Committee,

I want to start off by thanking you all for the invitation to today's informational hearing.

When I was 12 years old, I was given a Christmas present from my parents. That present was a .22 caliber single shot rifle. I was told I could go with my father to learn how to shoot safely, and that I had to not only enroll but pass the hunter's safety courses before I could graduate to a larger caliber rifle and hunt alongside my father. And by the time I was 13, I had passed my hunter's safety courses and brought down my first 3-point buck.

Since those days I have been a hunter my entire adult life – for over 40 years. Over the course of those years, I have seen our country break from standard firearm education and safety training and give rise to ignorance and fear. And unfortunately, this direction is continuing with the current bills before us – HB 2005, 2006, and 2007. Of those three, I would like to focus on HB 2006.

HB 2006 raises the legal age to purchase and possess certain types of firearms from 18 to 21 and restricts the caliber an 18-20-year old's firearm may accept. I find this bill troubling because we are raising the age for adults to exert a Constitutional right and it decides which ammunition is appropriate. If this public body truly thought that firearms should be restricted to those 21 and older, this bill would have reflected that. Instead, it gives a false notion that some calibers are less dangerous than others. This is the wrong type of mindset and an example of the ignorance surrounding firearms. Make no mistake, **when handled improperly and negligently used, any sized caliber of ammunition is deadly.**

The Remington 30-06 rifle is one of many commonly purchased hunting calibers that are offered in a semi-automatic platform. This rifle has a clip that will hold 3-4 bullets with a max of 5 bullets if a round is chambered. This is a firearm I am very accustomed to, having used it for many years. HB 2006 would prohibit 18 – 20-year-olds from purchasing and possessing a commonly used firearm.

HB 2006 and the other bills before you will do little to nothing to reduce gun violence in our state. Why? Because we do not have gun violence problem. We have a mental health problem. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health tallied the number of 2020 Oregon gun deaths. 592 Oregonians died as a result from guns, but less than 20% of that figure come from homicides. Yes, there were 109 firearm homicides in 2020 – 18% of the overall gun violence figure. 454 were from suicides and 29 deaths were caused by other means such as accidental discharges.

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And of the firearm homicides that occurred in 2020, 33% of them occurred in Multnomah County, despite the County only making up 19% of the state's overall population. What is Multnomah County doing?

I implore you to ask the sponsors of these bills how they will help the true epidemic that is firearm suicides. But I already know the answer: they won't. Every death is tragic. Which is why we should be focusing on the main issue at hand.

In closing, I would like to state that I am disappointed in the way these bills have been introduced. It is clear that very little or no stakeholder engagement has occurred while they were being drafted. It is my hope that these bills will be tabled, and all stakeholders will be properly engaged. The way all legislation should be worked on.

Thank you again for the opportunity.

Sincerely,

Virgle Osborne  
State Representative  
House District 2