



March 27, 2023

Chair Kropf, Vice- Chairs Anderson and Wallan, and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Cynthia Smith and I served in both the US Army Reserve and the US Air Force. I retired from the Air Force after 20 years of service. I live in Multnomah County. I serve as the Chair of the Veterans Caucus of the Democratic Party of Oregon. I'm testifying today on behalf of the Veterans Caucus to say that we support HB 3513.

In a study by Brown University's Watson Institute's A Cost of War Research Series, estimates that "30,177 active duty personnel and veterans of the post 9/11 wars have died by suicide, significantly more than the 7,057 service members killed in post-9/11 war operations."<sup>1</sup> Veterans are at a 57% higher risk for suicide more than the national average and suicide is the second leading cause of death for veterans under age 45.<sup>2</sup> The suicide rate for veterans is 1.5 times higher compared to non-veterans and is even higher for female veterans at a staggering 2.1 times higher than for female non-veterans.<sup>3</sup>

According the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), in 2021, nearly 7 out of 10 veteran deaths by suicide are the result of firearms injuries.<sup>4</sup> As a veteran I find these suicide statistics incredibly concerning.

Experts at the VA believe that if a person experiencing a suicidal crisis can't access the method they planned to use, they generally do not seek out other lethal means to attempt suicide.<sup>5</sup> So there is a strong indication that if a firearm is not readily accessible, an individual who planned to use their firearm to commit suicide might pause and hopefully reconsider.

I fully support HB 3513. This bill allows for someone who owns a firearm to establish a hold agreement with an individual or gun dealer for the safekeeping of their firearms. I hope that the training on suicide prevention in the concealed handgun license curriculum would help the owner of a firearm to recognize when they are at risk for suicide so they could establish a hold agreement with a gun dealer or safe individual in time. This could allow for that "pause", so a suicidal individual could seek help and not commit suicide.

In conclusion, I support HB 3513 because I believe it will help to save the lives of those at risk for suicide.

Respectfully,

Cynthia Smith  
Chair, DPO Veterans Caucus

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<sup>1</sup> [https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2021/Suitt\\_Suicides\\_Costs%20of%20War\\_June%2021%202021.pdf](https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2021/Suitt_Suicides_Costs%20of%20War_June%2021%202021.pdf)

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2022/2022-National-Veteran-Suicide-Prevention-Annual-Report-FINAL-508.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>

<https://www.nationalacademies.org/documents/embed/link/LF2255DA3DD1C41C0A42D3BEF0989ACAECE3053A6A9B/file/D850115BF0289C6487B7E59202FB2767DF404D2410BD?noSaveAs=1>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.va.gov/reach/lethal-means/?utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_campaign=search&gclid=CjwKCAjw\\_YShBhAiEiwAMomsEFPAt2UU3wuEW8aovvcX4y85v13UMaaNnn72T3D3wKhTHnj\\_HRSRaBoCqJQQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.va.gov/reach/lethal-means/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=search&gclid=CjwKCAjw_YShBhAiEiwAMomsEFPAt2UU3wuEW8aovvcX4y85v13UMaaNnn72T3D3wKhTHnj_HRSRaBoCqJQQAvD_BwE)

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.va.gov/reach/lethal-means/?utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_campaign=search&gclid=CjwKCAjw\\_YShBhAiEiwAMomsEFPAt2UU3wuEW8aovvcX4y85v13UMaaNnn72T3D3wKhTHnj\\_HRSRaBoCqJQQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.va.gov/reach/lethal-means/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=search&gclid=CjwKCAjw_YShBhAiEiwAMomsEFPAt2UU3wuEW8aovvcX4y85v13UMaaNnn72T3D3wKhTHnj_HRSRaBoCqJQQAvD_BwE)