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Senate Committee on Judiciary

To: Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee

From: Zulfiqar Ali Lokhandwala, BS, Joel R. Burnett, MD, FACP, and Jenny Silberger, MD, FACP on Behalf of the Oregon Chapter of the American College of Physicians

Date: February 5, 2024

Re: In Support of SB 1503

We write on behalf of the Oregon Chapter of the American College of Physicians, a medical organization representing approximately 1,750 medical students and practicing physicians who focus on the care of adults in Oregon. **We write in strong support of SB 1503.**

As health care workers, we understand that firearm-related injuries, deaths, and suicides are a major public health crisis in the state of Oregon. In 2021, the most recent year for which CDC data is available, 670 Oregonians died from firearm-related injuries, an increase from the prior years.<sup>1</sup> To put this loss into perspective, the number of firearm-related deaths is nearly 3 times the number of deaths in Oregon due to influenza and pneumonia.<sup>2</sup> In 2022, 90 Oregonians under the age of 25 died due to firearm-related causes, including 55 suicides, 31 homicides, and 1 accidental death.<sup>3</sup> In 2021, 889 Oregonians died by suicide (more than half using firearms), making it the 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in Oregon.<sup>4-5</sup>

These deaths represent a preventable public health crisis. Passing SB 1503 is an opportunity to reduce the toll of firearm-related injury and death in Oregon.

By providing funding to research firearm injury including suicide, SB 1503 will improve our understanding of where, when, why, and how we can improve firearm injury prevention in Oregon. Despite the public health crisis that firearm injuries pose in the nation, studies have found that we have insufficient funding and research looking at firearm violence, and that funding these research proposals are key to improving the safety of our communities.<sup>6,7</sup> Leading medical organizations, including our parent organization, The American College of Physicians

(ACP), and the American Medical Association (AMA), have called for increased firearm safety research.<sup>8,9</sup>

Furthermore, we support the proposed amendments to expand the task force to include stakeholders who have unique lived experiences and perspectives. Studies have shown that veteran suicides are more likely to involve firearms; in 2019, 69% of veteran suicides involved firearms compared to 48% of non-veteran suicides.<sup>10</sup> Members of our community who have been affected by firearm injury and suicide also bring a unique perspective and voice to the task force.

For more on our positions on firearm injury prevention, please reference our 2018 position paper in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, "[Reducing Firearm Injuries and Deaths in the United States: A Position Paper from the American College of Physicians](#)," or contact us for details.<sup>9</sup>

In summary, firearm injury is an ongoing public health problem in our state. In SB 1503, you have opportunities to both improve our understanding of the problem and provide tools for addressing it. We urge you to vote yes on SB 1503. Thank you for your consideration, and please don't hesitate to contact us for additional information or support.

Sincerely,

Zulfiqar Ali Lokhandwala, BS, Member, Health & Public Policy Committee of the Oregon Chapter of the American College of Physicians

Joel R. Burnett, MD, FACP, Co-Chair, Health & Public Policy Committee of the Oregon Chapter of the American College of Physicians

Jenny Silberger, MD, FACP, Governor of the Oregon Chapter of the American College of Physicians

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/firearm\\_mortality/firearm.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/firearm_mortality/firearm.htm)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/flu\\_pneumonia\\_mortality/flu\\_pneumonia.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/flu_pneumonia_mortality/flu_pneumonia.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Oregon Health Authority. (2022). Injury deaths and rates, by manner, sex and age. Retrieved from:

[https://visual-data.dhsoha.state.or.us/t/OHA/views/Oregondeathsfromexternalinjuries/DemogDash?%3AshowAppBanner=false&%3Adisplay\\_count=n&%3AshowVizHome=n&%3Aorigin=viz\\_share\\_link&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&%3Aembed=y](https://visual-data.dhsoha.state.or.us/t/OHA/views/Oregondeathsfromexternalinjuries/DemogDash?%3AshowAppBanner=false&%3Adisplay_count=n&%3AshowVizHome=n&%3Aorigin=viz_share_link&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&%3Aembed=y)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/states/oregon/or.htm>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/suicide-mortality/suicide.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Rajan, S., Branas, C. C., Hargarten, S., & Allegrante, J. P. (2018). Funding for Gun Violence Research Is Key to the Health and Safety of the Nation. *American Journal of Public Health, 108*(2), 194–195. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2017.304235>

<sup>7</sup> Stark, D. E., & Shah, N. H. (2017). Funding and Publication of Research on Gun Violence and Other Leading Causes of Death. *JAMA, 317*(1), 84–85. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2016.16215>

<sup>8</sup> *AMA to establish task force focused on firearm violence prevention.* (2022, November 14). American Medical Association.

<https://www.ama-assn.org/press-center/press-releases/ama-establish-task-force-focused-firearm-violence-prevention>

<sup>9</sup> Butkus, R., Doherty, R., & Bornstein, S. S. (2018). Reducing Firearm Injuries and Deaths in the United States: A Position Paper From the American College of Physicians. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 169(10), 704–707. <https://doi.org/10.7326/M18-1530>

<sup>10</sup> US Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention. 2021 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report. (September, 2021). Accessed February 5, 2024. <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2021/2021-National-Veteran-Suicide-Prevention-Annual-Report-FINAL-9-8-21.p>