



ASSOCIATION OF OREGON
COMMUNITY MENTAL
HEALTH PROGRAMS

To: Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary
From: Jenn Fraga, CSWA, MSW, Suicide Prevention Program Coordinator
Re: Neutral on SB 1503-3 Taskforce & Notice of Potential Issues
Date: 7 February 2024

The Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide is a statewide advisory group to the Oregon Health Authority. We are subject matter experts, state leaders, young adults, and suicide attempt and loss survivors from around the state. We work closely with local suicide prevention coalitions across the state. The role of the Alliance is to advise OHA on all matters related to youth and young adult suicide.

I am writing on behalf of the Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide (Alliance) in regards to SB 1503-3. We are interested in the possibility of this task force because of the potential for a coordinated, cross-sector effort that can help reduce obstacles and increase supports for those in crisis. We have some recommendations we hope you will consider for additional amendments that would lay a foundation of success for this task force and to make sure it does not operate in isolation.

Expanding membership in the -3 amendment to include a position for a “person with lived experience with community safety threats or suicidal ideation” is an important step to ensure the work of the task force is informed with relevant lived experience. However, we think it is important to not combine

these two different types of experiences so that both are represented on a task force that is going to look at community safety *and* firearm suicide prevention. We believe that by having representation from multiple lenses, the task force can better capture the spectrum of experiences they are looking to impact. Specifically, we recommend that the following positions should be included in the task force’s membership:

1. Person with lived experience of suicidal ideation;
2. Person who identifies as a suicide by firearm loss survivor; and
3. Representation from Communities of Color, who are disproportionately impacted by firearm deaths

In addition to these specific lived experience positions, we also think it would be helpful to have representation from the Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide, as we are currently the only legislatively enacted advisory group in the state on issues related to suicide. (The statutory name for the Alliance is Youth Suicide Intervention and Prevention Advisory Committee, which can be found in SB707 from 2019). Lastly, in regards to line 7 on page 2 of the -3 amendment, we don’t think membership should be limited to a psychologist who works with youth but should instead be expanded to have representation from a behavioral health provider who works with youth.

Clarification on what research the task force will be focusing on is extremely helpful when thinking of the scope of work they will be assigned. **We want to acknowledge that there are existing suicide**

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prevention research and gun violence research efforts underway across the state and that research has also previously been completed on some of these subjects. We hope that the task force will coordinate with existing efforts so as to not duplicate work and to ensure funding will be spent appropriately. It is also important to identify what the research will be used for – how does this meet an urgent need to do something that addresses firearm-related suicide prevention?

As the [data shows](#), firearms, specifically handguns, are the number one used means for suicide deaths. In 2022 alone, 72% of Oregon firearm related deaths were suicides, with even a higher percentage in rural areas of Oregon (Oregon Violent Death Reporting System). These are not new trends. This task force is looking at long-term supports and solutions to help reduce these numbers. While this is important, we also need something to be done now.

The Alliance has been working with Representative Tran and Senator Boquist on HB 4096 and we believe that it would significantly improve access to temporary off-site storage for those experiencing a range of crises, including suicidal ideation. We hope this Committee will support HB 4096 when it comes to your docket. We know that this proposal works as a number of states have passed, implemented, and saved lives with similar proposals.

Warmly,

Jenn Fraga