



Office of the Senate President

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

For the record, my name is Rob Wagner, State Senator for Senate District 19 and I serve as President of the Oregon Senate. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 1503 — the Community Safety and Firearm Suicide Prevention Task Force Bill. I'll be speaking to the -3 amendment today.

This bill represents a crucial next step in overcoming stigmas around mental health, supporting our neighbors who are most vulnerable, and saving lives from firearm suicides. The task force created by SB 1503 will provide the Legislature with data-informed, effective, proven steps we could take to reduce firearm suicides in Oregon.

We know that suicide rates have increased across the country since the COVID-19 pandemic, especially among our youth. In Oregon, firearms are involved in more than half of suicides each year. According to the OHA, Oregon's firearm suicide rate is 42 percent higher than the national average, with veterans, men, and people over 75 at particular risk.

This task force consists of a broad range of stakeholders so we can ensure the task force is looking at this problem from many different perspectives. These stakeholders include four legislators — one from each legislative caucus — as well as:

- A representative of a state public health agency
- A public safety policy advisor to the Governor
- A representative of a nonprofit organization focused on suicide prevention with experience in lethal means safety
- A representative of a community-based firearm safety and protocols program
- A representative of the public health research field
- A behavioral health professional or provider
- An adult behavioral health provider
- A medical provider who has worked with firearm violence victims
- A psychologist who works with youth
- A tribal representative from a suicide prevention program
- A person with lived experience with community safety threats or suicidal ideation
- A representative of law enforcement
- A professional who works in veterans' mental health



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My hope is that with a broad range of stakeholders and the allocation of \$400,000 for third-party research, we can build on successes such as Adi's Act and Senator Bill Hansell's AgriStress Helpline by identifying the best ways to support Oregonians and prevent these tragedies.

In coordination with the Department of Justice, the Oregon Health Authority and federally recognized Indian tribes, the task force will be looking topics, including:

- How to better support youth experiencing suicidal ideation.
- How to better support rural Oregonians experiencing suicidal ideation.
- How to reduce stigma on suicidal ideation.
- Barriers to suicide prevention support.
- Current community safety protocol across this state, including at hospitals and behavioral health facilities, and recommendations for improvement of the protocol.
- Locations and events most targeted in community safety threats.
- Rates of success for extreme risk protection orders and barriers to implementation and capacity for police stations or other entities to implement voluntary surrender or holding of firearms.
- Barriers to implementing best practices for community safety and suicide prevention.
- How domestic violence is a risk factor for community safety threats and suicide.

The task force will report back to the Legislature annually until its sunset in 2026 so the Legislature has opportunities to consider its recommendations.

At the end of the day, colleagues, this is a task force bill. If we at the Legislature want to take on this challenge and support vulnerable Oregonians at risk from suicide, then we need to know what are the most effective, data-informed and proven steps that we could take.

Thank you for your time and I hope you will support SB 1503-3.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert A. Wagner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Rob Wagner