

February 7, 2024

Chair Prozanski and Members of the Committee:

I am writing today in support of SB 1503, the Task Force bill on gun violence prevention and firearm suicide prevention.

I am a resident of West Salem and I am very concerned about the amount of gun violence in this state and country. I have long supported strong and sensible gun laws.

Sixteen years ago, my nephew (my Godson) committed suicide with a firearm while in the military. A task force such as the one proposed could help those who contemplate suicide and perhaps help prevent many deaths.

Every year, we lose close to 600 Oregonians to preventable firearm deaths. Black Oregonians are roughly 10 times more likely than white people to die by firearm homicide. And the firearm suicide rate in rural Oregon is 2.5 times higher than in urban areas and the state's veteran suicide rate is 37% higher than the national average.

I strongly support the SB1503, Task Force bill, and urge the Task Force to prioritize prevention efforts that are centered around those most impacted by gun deaths and shootings, as well as firearm suicides. I urge the Task Force to analyze and prioritize ongoing, sustainable funding for efforts for prevention work that is making the most meaningful, equitable impact, both for homicide and suicide prevention.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony on this issue.

Sincerely,

Gary M. Forner  
1845 Lambert Ct. NW  
Salem, OR 97304