

Submitter: Susan Weedall
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure: SB1503

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 volunteer with the Oregon Alliance for Gun Safety (OAGS), and am a concerned community member in NE Portland. As a volunteer, I collate news around the state pertaining to gun safety, and despair over the weekly rate of deaths by gun in urban communities, especially in Portland and Salem. When I see the data on suicide rates by gun in Oregon's rural communities, I am equally alarmed.

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 am heartened to see that ERPO implementation will be discussed, as it is an underutilized tool compared to other states. My understanding is that task force members will not be paid, and I am concerned that policy will deter front line responders participating in community gun violence program participation in my locality and suicide prevention in rural communities. Mayor Tishaura Jones, St. Louis put it well: "If you want to go wide, go with the government. If you want to go deep, go with NGOs. We all need to go together". 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,
Susan Weedall, Portland, Oregon