

Submitter:

James Haugh

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

House Committee On Judiciary

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB4145

I am James Haugh, a freshman currently attending Lake Oswego High School. I strongly encourage you to support House Bill 4145. Every day I walk into school, as I step over the boundary, a small voice in the back of my head silently wonders whether today will be my last. Every time a voice booms over the loudspeaker, I stop. My heart rate speeds up, my palms get sweaty, my mind begins to theorize how it might announce a lockdown or which classroom my imagined shooter might enter first. This is not normal. School is meant to be a place of growth, not terror.

When I was a kid, I went to a summer writing camp at Catlin Gabel, accompanied by a friend named Emily and an instructor I had known for years. We started a new day, walked to the small, two floor building near a round field of freshly mowed grass. The staircase upstairs was tiny, we could only walk up one person at a time, but it was cute and charming. I was discussing stories we had written with my friends in a small group around the wooden tables when Emily mentioned that she heard something, a bang. We didn't think much of it, but soon after, the voice of a loudspeaker came on. A woman spoke quickly, in a panicked tone informing us that she had heard gunshots and believed that there was an active shooter on campus. Whispers of terrified children filled the room. A lockdown began. We quickly turned off the lights, put the chairs up with shaky hands and blocked the door. We hid under the tables, our eyes wide and terrified. The room was silent. In a second we had gone from discussing our fantasy diner at Moe's to cowering under the tables, and I came to a horrifying realization. My stomach dropped. I was going to die. In the end, it was a false alarm. However, that doesn't make the experience any less real. The fear I felt was the fear of a child who was about to die in an active shooter situation, fear that hundreds of children feel each year. Children shouldn't have to live in terror that their next day at school will be their last, and they shouldn't have to be taught how to have a lockdown or survive a shooter. This should not be normal. Guns are the 2nd-leading cause of death among children and teens in Oregon, and the leading cause nationwide. We've made great progress when we enacted a permit to purchase law in 2022, but we can and must do better. The provisions in House Bill 4145 will enable state agencies and law enforcement departments across the state to implement life-saving gun violence prevention laws to the best of their ability. Please lead our state toward a future free from gun violence and the fear it forces us to live under by doing your part to advance this bill. Thank you.