



Oregon Public  
Health Association

## Oregon Public Health Association

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[www.OregonPublicHealth.org](http://www.OregonPublicHealth.org)

April 16, 2017

Sen. Floyd Prozanski, Chair  
Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee  
900 Court St. NE, Salem 97301

Chair Prozanski, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 868 and Senate Bill 797.

My name is Jessica Quarles. I am a public health professional and a nurse. I am testifying on behalf of the Oregon Public Health Association, of which I am a member.

OPHA members are health professionals, academics, and community leaders from across the state and we are an affiliate of the American Public Health Association. We prioritize legislation that advances the public's health in Oregon and we see these bills as critical to meeting this mission.

We know gun violence is a public health epidemic. In Oregon, firearm deaths outpace traffic fatalities (1) and we exceed the national average in our high rate of suicides (2). In Oregon, we lose on average one person each day to firearms (3) and the vast majority of these - over 80% - are suicides (3).

As we hear the numbers it can be numbing- we may feel like there is nothing we can do. But these bills add the time and tools to help the most vulnerable.

As a nurse, I know when people are experiencing intimate partner violence or when people have thoughts of self harm or harm to others - these are 'drop everything' moments. We know that just like a heart attack- these situations are life threatening. There is much we can do to get people out of a crisis and on more stable footing, but to do this we need time- and presence of firearms can take this away in an instant. Giving loved ones a process to temporarily remove firearms buys time for essential interventions.

I also always look at legislation to make sure it increases access to care and does not create new barriers. Looking at Connecticut's extreme risk protection law, in more than half the cases - people were seen immediately in the hospital or ER. In addition, nearly one third received critical treatment in the year after the intervention. (4)

Far from saying 'there is nothing that we can do' let's take action to strengthen our existing laws and establish lifesaving tools to allow families and law enforcement to prevent tragedies.

I urge you to support SB 797 and SB 868. Thank you for your consideration of this important public health issue and thank you for your service to Oregonians.

Sincerely,  
Jessica Quarles, BSN, MPH  
Oregon Public Health Association Member

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Supporting data:

(1)

Oregon Motor Vehicle Fatality Data:

[https://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TDATA/car/docs/2014\\_QuickFacts.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TDATA/car/docs/2014_QuickFacts.pdf)

[https://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TDATA/car/docs/2013\\_QuickFacts.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TDATA/car/docs/2013_QuickFacts.pdf)

[http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TDATA/car/docs/2011\\_QuickFacts.pdf](http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TDATA/car/docs/2011_QuickFacts.pdf)

[http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TDATA/car/docs/2010\\_QuickFacts.pdf](http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TDATA/car/docs/2010_QuickFacts.pdf)

[http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TDATA/car/docs/2009CrashSummaryBook\\_Web.pdf](http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TDATA/car/docs/2009CrashSummaryBook_Web.pdf)

Firearm Fatality Data:

Shen X, Millet L, 2012. Violent Deaths in Oregon: 2010. Oregon Health Authority, Portland, Oregon. Accessed here:

<https://public.health.oregon.gov/diseasesconditions/injuryfatalitydata/pages/nvdrs.aspx>

2016 update access here April 2017:

<https://public.health.oregon.gov/DiseasesConditions/InjuryFatalityData/Documents/NVDRS/SummaryDataTablesByYear16.pdf>

Shen X, Millet L. 2013. Violent Deaths in Oregon: 2011. Oregon Health Authority, Portland, Oregon.

<http://public.health.oregon.gov/DiseasesConditions/InjuryFatalityData/Documents/NVDRS/SummaryDataTablesByYear.pdf>

(2)

Suicide in Oregon: Oregon Health Authority, PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION Injury and Violence Prevention Program. Updated January 5, 2015.

Note: "Rates of suicide in Oregon have been higher than the US for the past 30 years. Oregon ranks in the top 10 among states for suicide incidence. "

Accessed here:

[https://public.health.oregon.gov/DiseasesConditions/InjuryFatalityData/Documents/Fact%20Sheets/Suicide\\_2015v03022015.pdf](https://public.health.oregon.gov/DiseasesConditions/InjuryFatalityData/Documents/Fact%20Sheets/Suicide_2015v03022015.pdf)

(3)

Firearm Fatalities in Oregon 2010-2014 FactSheet. Oregon Health Authority, PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION Injury and Violence Prevention Program. Last updated July 2016

"On average, at least one Oregonian dies from firearm injury every day."

Between 2010-2014, there were 2,280 firearm deaths and 1,897 (83%) were due to suicide.

Accessed here:

[https://public.health.oregon.gov/DiseasesConditions/InjuryFatalityData/Documents/Fact%20Sheets/firearms\\_2016v07132016.pdf](https://public.health.oregon.gov/DiseasesConditions/InjuryFatalityData/Documents/Fact%20Sheets/firearms_2016v07132016.pdf)

(4)

Swanson, Jeffrey W. and Norko, Michael and Lin, Hsiu-Ju and Alanis-Hirsch, Kelly and Frisman, Linda and Baranoski, Madelon and Easter, Michele and Gilbert, Allison and Swartz, Marvin and Bonnie, Richard J., Implementation and Effectiveness of Connecticut's Risk-Based Gun Removal Law: Does it Prevent Suicides? (August 24, 2016). Law and Contemporary Problems, Forthcoming. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2828847>