From: Marilyn Sewell
To: DeJong Annola
Cc: Elise Gautier
Subject: testimony on gun control legislation
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Please deliver the following e-mail testimony to legislators:

Testimony supporting SB 347 and SB 700
Rev. Dr. Marilyn Sewell, Minister Emerita
First Unitarian Church, Portland Oregon

Five members of my extended family have been killed with guns. One was a hunting accident, another was a murder/suicide, and two were homicides.

Let me tell you one of the stories. My father came in from a fishing trip and lay down on the bed to rest. He had been drinking. My stepmother told him to get off her white chenille bedspread, with his dirty shoes and clothes, but he ignored her. She kept insisting, and he pulled a gun from underneath the bed where it was kept, pointed it at her and said, "I guess you will leave me alone now." Again, she insisted. He shot her in the chest. Shocked at what he had done, he called 911. They lived in a small town, and the emergency vehicle arrived 45 minutes later, too late to save her life. During that time, he listened to her calls for help, her pathetic struggle to understand, before she died.

It is hard to measure how such a death affects family and friends. This killing affected me in a number of ways. I was horrified and ashamed. I could not bring myself to talk about it to anyone except my psychiatrist – I couldn't let even my closest friends know. For months I experienced a weight on my chest, as though a huge rock was pressing out my breath.

No charges were brought against my father – the death was seen as a domestic quarrel. But my father was not unaffected – he slowly lost his mind, due to the combined effects of alcoholism and a guilty conscience. He spent his last seven years in a mental institution, and did not know even his children for the final few years.

We cannot prevent every drug-related shootout, every murder of a woman by the man who "owns her," every suicide, every mass killing. But when guns are so easily accessible, and so many deaths are occurring, we have to start somewhere.

I am asking you to do what you know is right – to face down the gun lobby, financed and controlled by the makers and sellers of weapons. To do so will require courage on your part, I understand that. But you were not elected to give in to whoever pushes the hardest. You were elected to lead. I'm asking you to change the practice of easy guns and needless deaths.

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