

Testimony of  
Tom O'Connor  
On SB 801  
Oregon Senate Committee on Education  
March 27, 2019

Chairman Wagner and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 801 – First Grade Firearm Safety Classes.

I am a life-long gun owner and a resident of Clackamas County. As a gun owner and a parent, I cannot support this bill, however well intentioned. My belief is that it is the responsibility of adult gun owners and parents to keep firearms out of the hands of children rather than expecting first graders to suspend their natural curiosity as the result of a classroom lecture.

1. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that the kind of behavioral prevention class envisioned by this bill actually works with children in real life. In fact, there is evidence from several research studies that such programs are not effective in preventing unauthorized child access to firearms. ( GAO 17 – 665)
2. I believe that precious school time and money devoted to safety and violence prevention would be better focused on ensuring that all of our kids have access to trained and funded school counselors.
3. The focus of firearm safety education programs should be on adults to inform them of the proven ways to store firearms safely and securely so that children (or any unauthorized person) cannot get their hands on them.
4. The unintended consequence of gun safety classroom programs can be to divert attention and responsibility away from adults to adopt proven ways to keep firearms out of the hands of those who would do harm to themselves or the community whether accidentally or intentionally.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.