



## Testimony in Support of SB 978-1

April 2, 2019

To: Senate Committee On Judiciary

Re: Oregon Senate Bill 978-1

Guided by the values and expertise of medicine and public health, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) works to protect human life from the gravest threats to health and survival.

Gun violence has reached epidemic proportions in our state and nation and should be understood and treated as a public health crisis. A public health approach has been successful in reducing death and disability from infectious diseases, automobile accidents, unsafe food, and consumer products, but similar strategies have not been put in effect to address injuries and fatalities from firearms. From emergency rooms to operating rooms, from community centers to public health round tables, we see the tragic result of these policy failures. Here in Oregon, there are more fatalities each year from firearms than from motor vehicle crashes.<sup>1</sup>

Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility has a history of advocating for policies to address gun violence. We sit on the Oregon Health & Science University's Gun Violence as a Public Health Issue Advisory Committee, a broad coalition of health advocates searching for community solutions to gun violence. In 2017, we received over 150 submissions to our Greenfield Peace Writing Scholarship from Oregon high school students on the subject of solving the public health crisis of gun violence. In that same year, Oregon PSR helped to pass SB719, establishing an Extreme Risk Protection Order, which is like a restraining order on gun ownership for persons in crisis.

As an organization of health professionals and public health advocates, we believe we must employ sound public policy to protect the public health. This approach is critical to reducing gun deaths and injuries in Oregon and across the United States of America.

As doctors, nurses, psychologists, naturopaths, public health experts, and other health professionals, we are writing an evidence-based prescription to address gun violence: We call for your support of Senate Bill 978-1. We support this bill in its entirety, and there are two elements in particular that we would like to speak to from a health professional perspective.

**Safe Storage** Proper storage of firearms can help prevent casualties by suicide and accidents. Among children, the majority (89%) of unintentional shooting deaths occur in the home. Most of these deaths occur when children are playing with a loaded gun

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<sup>1</sup> From the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS). Deaths in Oregon In 2016 - 492 from firearms and 17 from motor vehicle.



in their parent's absence. Also, people who report "firearm access" are at twice the risk of homicide and more than three times the risk of suicide compared to those who do not own or have access to firearms.

**Reporting firearm injury data** One of the most troublesome parts of the gun violence public health crisis is the fact that there is limited research available on the state of the crisis, which in turn makes it more difficult to develop strategies for preventing firearm injuries. SB 978-1 seeks to change that by mandating hospitals to report firearm injury data to the Oregon Health Authority. This data will be used for public health critical response planning, prevention activities, and other crucial uses. Having accurate data is one of the first steps towards solving the public health crisis of gun violence.

A majority of the Oregon public health professionals and gun owners alike strongly support the measures outlined in SB 978-1. It is time for the Legislature to take action to confront the epidemic of gun violence in our communities. The provisions in this bill are a good first step. Please join us in supporting SB 978-1 for the health of all Oregonians.

Sincerely,



Kelly Campbell  
Executive Director

