

3-10-21

To Chair Prusak and Members of the Committee:

My name is Carol Manstrom and I am a resident of Lane County. I've lived in Eugene, Oregon for over 30 years. I am retired from a 26 year career in law enforcement. I carried a firearm as a part of my job. I am a gun owner. I am writing today in strong support of House Bill 2510.

4 years ago, my teenage son died. My son's name was Will. He was a Senior at Marist High School in Eugene. At that time, Will was living across town from me, at my former husband's residence. My former husband, also a law enforcement officer, left a loaded handgun unsecured and within easy access in his home. On Valentine's Day 2017 my son, Will, died by suicide, using that unsecured gun.

Just 3 days prior, Will and I met for lunch and we went to an appointment to have his Senior pictures taken, and, I gave him his high school class ring. Will was planning to attend Oregon State University, with a Pre-Engineering major. He looked forward to living in the dorms with his friends. He was getting ready to start his high school Varsity Track practices. I know in my heart that Will did not want to die.

But, being a teenager can be tough. We were all young once, and we know it is easy for teens to make impulsive decisions. We also know that teens do not typically share their innermost feelings with their parents. And we know from the Oregon Health Authority's own study of Suicides in Oregon that of those who died by suicide, approximately 62% did NOT disclose their suicidal intentions to anyone before they died. This is a reality in Oregon today, as teen suicide rates continue to rise. While our kids are growing up, there are so many things we do to protect them—infant car seats, bike helmets, protective athletic gear, seatbelts, and more....we should emphasize responsible gun storage just as much!

If a loaded gun was not accessible to Will, I believe he would be alive today. Safe storage prevents suicides.

I urge you to do your own research....please look at the facts and the statistics. Access the web sites for Means Matter at Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the CDC and our own Oregon Health Authority.

The Second Amendment does not absolve gun owners of personal responsibility for careless or reckless behavior. There is a reason why one of the Cardinal Rules of Firearm Safety is, "Treat every firearm as if it were loaded." The reason is -- guns are inherently dangerous. A gun should only be accessible to the lawful owner. This is common sense.

My son's precious life, and his future, have been lost forever. But, I am here today to be Will's voice.

Safe gun storage is NOT anti- 2nd Amendment; it is anti-tragedy. House Bill 2510 safeguards children and prevents suicides of persons of all ages and all walks of life.

I urge the Committee to support passage of House Bill 2510.

Thank you.

Carol Manstrom