



Testimony in Support of HB 2510
House Committee on Health Care
Date: March 10th, 2021

Dear Chair Prusak, Vice Chairs Hayden and Salinas, and members of the committee,

My name is Marianne Parshley, MD FACP, and I am a general internist in East Portland caring mostly for geriatric patients. I am also Governor of the Oregon Chapter of American College of Physicians and a Trustee of the Oregon Medical Association. I am testifying for myself and on behalf of OMA and Oregon ACP which support passage of HB 2510.

Because of my care of our older patients with dementia and their caregiving family members, I am very aware of the danger of firearms and ammunition which is not safely stored. We know that 45% of adults older than 65 either own a gun or live in a household with a gunowner. If we also consider those who are living with dementia in this country (6 million in the US as of 2020 and increasing), approximately 60% of those living with dementia live in households with firearms. Add to this the fact that 91% of all firearms deaths amongst older adults with dementia is due to suicide and for people with dementia of all stages, firearms are the most common method.

I have two stories (details are changed for privacy) to illustrate this risk.

One patient has Lewy Body dementia, a form of dementia which causes visual hallucinations for some. This patient sees intruders in their house every night and is frequently throwing things in an attempt to scare away or evict the intruders. They talk frequently about what they would like to do with the intruders to stop them. Fortunately, this patient does not live in a household with firearms as they would be at risk for using them, if not safely stored, in response to the fear of the 'intruders.'

Second is a patient with mild dementia which has caused a lot of paranoia, poor judgement and inability to evaluate reasonable options. They have actually attempted to chase family members around the house in anger and have occasionally talked about suicide, though not often. This family has multiple loaded weapons in the house, easily accessible. I have counseled the family and patient to safely store these firearms unloaded and locked multiple times, and yet this has not been done to date.

Safe storage and counseling about safe storage (locking guns in storage, storing them without ammunition and unloaded and/or trigger locks) is one of the steps we take when working long term with our patients with cognitive decline. Having this bill become law would help us in this effort to keep our patients and their families safe.

Simply put, safe gun storage laws are effective in preventing both unintentional injuries and suicide. They save families and older patients from suffering, injury and death.

I urge you to vote yes on HB 2510. Thank you for your consideration. I am willing to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully,

Marianne Parshley, MD FACP
Governor of the Oregon Chapter of American College of Physicians

Firearms and Dementia: Clinical Considerations, by Marian E. Betz MD, MPH et al, [Annals of Internal Medicine](https://doi.org/10.7326/M18-0140), July 3, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.7326/M18-0140>

<https://www.alz.org/media/Documents/alzheimers-facts-and-figures.pdf>

