

I am writing to support SB554-A20 relating to prohibiting guns from the Capital and other public building and requiring safe storage of firearms. I am both a gun owner and a retired psychologist. My interest in laws about gun safety began after I with served as a mental health first responder at Thurston High School in Springfield on the day of a shooting (5/21/98). In that tragic incident Kip Kinkel brought guns from home to kill 2 students and wound 25 others. Before coming to the school that day, Kinkel killed both of his parents. As I have subsequently learned the details of Kinkel's actions, I believe a safe storage law might have prevented this incident and other mass shootings since that date.

According to the Wall Street Journal (4/5/2018) 85% of the guns used in school shootings between 1990 and 2018 came from the shooter's home or the home of an acquaintance. Records of Kinkel's previous therapy sessions with Dr. Jeffery Hicks became public due to his trial. Kinkel's mother sought counseling for him because she was concerned about his anger problems and "his fascination with guns, explosives, and knives." Although Dr. Hicks addressed Kinkel's anger, apparently he did not review safe storage of guns in the home. SB 554-A20 would alert both professionals and family members to inquire about the storage of guns in the home. Parents would ask about gun storage before they allow their child to sleep over at the home of a friend.

Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the U.S. and over half are by firearms. 85% of suicide attempts with guns are lethal. Suicide is often an impulsive act that occurs too quickly for the purchase of a gun. (Editorial in Harvard Public Health 2021) Many suicides could be prevented through preventing easy access to guns in the home. As a mental health professional I believe safe gun storage should be addressed in any case with suicidal risk. If passed, SB554-A20 would be part of alerting family members, law enforcement and mental health professionals to address the issue of safe gun storage in any cases concerning individuals at risk for violence or suicide.

As we learned on January 6, 2021, capital buildings are at unique risk for political violence. Public schools and universities have been the site of several serious mass shootings. Safety for public officials and the general public would be increased by SB554-A20 because law enforcement would be able to turn away persons attempting open carry in these public buildings. Courthouses already use airport style scanners. With this bill metal scanners could be added to the Oregon State Capital to discover concealed weapons.