

Teri Mills RN
Everytown for Gun Safety/Moms Demand Action
Testimony in support of SB 554-20A
April 22, 2021

Chair Smith Warner and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of what I believe to be one of the most impactful bills of this legislation session, SB 554-20A. My name is Teri Mills. I reside in Washington County. I am a retired nurse educator, a mother, a grandmother and am an active volunteer of the Oregon Chapter of Moms Demand Action.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) provides [annual statistics on fatal firearm injuries](#). This and other data from recent years illustrate the following:

- The firearm suicide rates among young people in Oregon has grown 124% over the past decade. This is the highest in the country.¹
- Firearms are the second leading cause of deaths among children and teens in Oregon.²
- Nearly 3 in 4 firearm suicides by young people take place in or around a home.³ Another study showed over 80 percent of firearm suicides by children involve a gun belonging to a family member.⁴

This happens with terrifying frequency. In 2020, there were at least 293 unintentional shootings by children, resulting in nearly 6 people shot every week.

Oregon is not immune to these tragedies. Last October, a [3-year-old boy shot himself](#)⁵ in the head after he found a handgun in a drawer at his Aloha home. He died as a result of his injuries.

We will hear today from the opposition about many [myths about guns](#)⁶:

Hide the gun and this is sufficient to keep kids from accessing it.

False- 75% of children who live in homes with guns know where they are stored.

My child is not strong enough to fire a gun. Not true- children as young as 3 years old may be strong enough to pull the trigger of a handgun.

Children know the difference between real guns and toy guns. In fact, in 16% of unintentional firearm deaths among children younger than 13 years of age, the gun was mistaken for a toy.

I will instruct my child never to touch my gun. Unfortunately, studies have found that most children will handle a gun if they find one, even if they have been taught not to.

The cornerstone of a nurse's practice is health promotion and prevention. I teach the importance of wearing a helmet when riding a bike, fastening a seatbelt when driving a car or riding on an airplane, and making sure poisonous substances are closed with a childproof cap. By encouraging these practices, I am not taking away the bicycle, the automobile, medications or cleaning supplies. I am just keeping them securely stored so they are not accessible by a child. The same goes for firearms. We are not asking to confiscate guns, we want these securely stored to end needless deaths and life changing injuries.

Please help save lives and vote yes on SB 554-20A.

¹ Center for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. (February 9, 2021). Fatal Injury and Violence Data. Retrieved February 22, 2021 from <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html>

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. WONDER Online Database, Underlying Cause of Death, Injury Mechanism & All Other Leading Causes. Data from 2019.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS), Ages 10-24, Five-Year Average: 2013 to 2017.

⁴ Renee M. Johnson et al., "Who Are the Owners of Firearms Used in Adolescent Suicides?" *Suicide & Life-Threatening Behavior* 40, no. 6 (2010): 609-11, <https://bit.ly/3jwrlXU>.

⁵ D'Angelo, B. (October 11, 2020). Oregon boy, 3, dies after shooting himself in head with gun found in home. *KIRO 7*. Retrieved February 22, 2021 from <https://www.kiro7.com/news/trending/oregon-boy-3-dies-after-shooting-himself-head-with-gun-found-home/P5RASTLD6VH73PIHMLTEPOH74E/>

⁶ Nationwide Children's Hospital. (2020). Gun safety. Retrieved February 22, 2021 from <https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/research/areas-of-research/center-for-injury-research-and-policy/injury-topics/general/gun-safety>