

I am writing in support of SB554-20, to allow guns to be prohibited from schools, universities, airports, and government buildings and for the secure storage of firearms. I believe these measures will save lives.

Even before the increasingly extremist views in our society took hold, the expanding presence of guns in public spaces in tandem with more frequent gun violence has become scary and intimidating. Recent incidents at the Oregon capitol and in DC have made it obvious to me that firearms should not be allowed to be held by non-law enforcement individuals in places where government business is being conducted. The idea of the authorized presence of firearms on school grounds seems like a prescription for a child-involved shooting accident or attempt at self-harm. And I've not seen any reputable data indicating that allowing persons to carry guns into these locations has helped in any way to protect the public or individuals or make any situation safer. When attending a public hearing at the Oregon capitol a few years ago, I felt shocked and intimidated by a large group of open-carry holders in the hallway where I stood awaiting entry. I would no longer feel safe in that environment.

In the related bill, I firmly believe that legal encouragement for secure firearm storage can save many lives; particularly those of children and of household members of any age who are intent on self-harm. It can also prevent gun thefts that may contribute to gun injuries and deaths during criminal acts. We've all heard or read in the media multiple times about kids, other family members or visiting friends who easily access a loaded gun in a household with disastrous results. A good friend's husband, recently diagnosed with Alzheimer's and expressing a wish to die, was lovingly protected by his family members who ensured that his gun was unloaded and locked away from his potential access.

The concerns I've heard from gun owners about their fear of lacking firearm access in an emergency seems unfounded and not sustainable given new technologies that are available to address this issue. I suspect these instances are quite rare in comparison to the frequent unintentional and accidental occurrences of gun violence.