



Testimony in support of SB 554 A

April 22, 2021

Chair Smith Warner, Vice Chairs Drazan and Holvey, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dr. Andy Harris. I am a board member of Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR), and we ask your support of SB 554 A, which would prohibit guns in certain public buildings and require that guns are locked when not in use.

We believe that the possession of firearms, whether concealed or open carry, should be limited in public places at the discretion of city, county, and metropolitan service districts, and in commercial airports, and on the campuses of schools, colleges and universities. This is a public health issue, and no one should feel that his/her safety is threatened by guns in public areas.

Oregon PSR opposes an amendment that would prevent cities and counties from prohibiting firearms in their public buildings and grounds. While we support banning firearms from the State Capitol, we believe that the decision to limit firearms from other state, county and municipal buildings and campuses should be left up to the individual jurisdictions.

SB 554 A now incorporates HB2510 which would require gun owners to secure their weapons when not in use, either by placing them in a locked container or by using a trigger lock. The measure would also require people whose guns are stolen to promptly report the theft to law enforcement.

Securing firearms protects children and adults by preventing unintentional shootings and gun suicides. Every day in the U.S. eight children are shot by an unlocked or unsupervised gun in the home. 1.2 million elementary-aged, latch-key children have access to guns in their homes. No one's right to gun-ownership is infringed if we make guns safer and keep them away from children.

Gun suicide claims the lives of 23,000 Americans every year, including a child or teenager committing suicide with a gun every six hours. According to one study, households that locked both firearms and ammunition have a 78% lower risk of self-inflicted firearm injuries.

An estimated 200,000 to 500,000 guns are stolen in America each year, and many are funneled into the underground market, where they can be transferred to people with dangerous histories. This is a particular concern today in Oregon where gun sales increased by 43% in the first 10 months of 2020.

Opponents of gun storage laws complain that such restrictions would delay use of a gun in the event of an intruder in the home. Not so. Modern gun lock boxes, sold for less than \$100, can be opened with a swipe of a preprogrammed fingerprint.

Oregon PSR is working to reduce the high incidence of gun violence in our society. We believe that SB 554 A can have a positive impact by restricting guns from many public buildings, and by keeping guns out of the hands of children, thieves and people in crisis. We urge your support of SB 554 A as a public safety measure.

Andy Harris, MD
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