

Chair Smith-Warner, Vice-chairs Darzan and Holvey, and members of the committee,

My name is Maria Faria. I am a gun violence prevention advocate, and I submit this testimony to urge the committee to **support SB 554-A**.

SB 554-A would make ours K-12 schools, Universities, airports and ports safer by prohibiting citizens from carrying guns into their buildings, and will promote responsible gun ownership by requiring guns to be securely stored. This bill, although carrying concepts from the originally introduced language, and incorporating concepts from HB 2510, is already significantly weakened when compared to the previously introduced bills. No more concessions should be made.

Currently, local and school officials in Oregon are forced to allow the carrying of loaded firearms into government buildings and all public Oregon schools including grades K-12 and most areas of college campuses. This practice is dangerous to all who frequent these buildings.

The intent of a uniformed police officer carrying a loaded gun is clear to all around them, as is the level of training that person has had on handling the gun. No assumptions can be made about intent or training of a civilian carrying a loaded gun. An armed civilian is a threat until otherwise proved. Armed threats are unacceptable in a democracy. In a democracy, all have the right to live in freedom of fear.

Citizens must have the right to be at **airports and ports** free of fear of gun fire, and must be able to attend hearings and other legislative functions at the **Oregon Capitol free of fear**. The presence of loaded guns infringes on this basic right!

Guns have no place on School and College campuses, and no campus should be forced to allow concealed handguns in dorms, classrooms, sporting events, and other sensitive areas. Those who work, live and frequent these buildings agree.

In surveys conducted in 2013 and 2012, 95% of college presidents and 94% of college faculty indicated they oppose concealed carry on campus. The opposition to guns on campus is beyond presidents and faculty. A 2018 study found that members of the campus community at large -including those who own guns to protect themselves, believe that allowing concealed carry on campus would damage a school's academic environment and potentially escalate contentious situations, corroborating what was learned in 2013.¹

In survey of 2012, 79% of College students said they would not feel safe if concealed guns were allowed onto their campuses. More recently, a systematic review of surveys published in 2020 confirmed that the majority of students across multiple college campuses oppose allowing guns on campus. ²

Mental health issues and guns on campus are a dangerous combination. Nearly 1 in 10 undergraduates reported "seriously considering attempting suicide" and 1.4% had attempted suicide in the past 12 months. A suicide attempt with a gun is lethal in 95% of the cases, while only 5% of attempted suicides by other means are fatal. And research shows that most people who survive a suicide attempt will not go on to complete it. ³

Teaching and legislative environments are inherently stressful, and events taking place in these places can trigger irrational, emotionally charged responses in acute manner. I have more than 30 years of schooling, and I have worked as faculty and research associate at three Universities. I have witnessed these reactions in many forms. I have lost classmates to suicide, I have lost students to suicide, and I have seen students threatening faculty and administrators. and we all know of cases where students or faculty actually committed murder.

Intentional shootings are all too known to University communities. Stressors are real, causes are many, and responses to stressors vary.

Violence against faculty has been documented multiple times. In the University of Alabama on February, 2010, a biology professor opened fire during a department meeting killing 3 and injuring another 3 colleagues -he had failed to achieve tenure. Three professors were shot during a meeting where the shooter was to defend his master's thesis at

the San Diego State University in 1996. After not receiving a distinction prize for his Ph.D. dissertation, a graduate physics student shot six people killing five, including three professors at the University of Iowa in 1991. At California State University, a student was angry over a grade and shot the professor who gave him the low grade -the professor later died at the hospital, and the student died of suicide at the scene. In Michigan, a Business Professor, was shot to death by a student who had failed an examination. And at the University of Arizona Nursing School, a student who had failed pediatric nursing class and was struggling in a critical care class, shot and killed three of his professors then killed himself in 2002.

Administrators are also at risk -In St. Louis, Missouri, a part-time student shot an administrator in his office at the Institute of Business and Arts. At New York City Technical College, a student shot and killed one person and injured another four over a dispute over financial aid.

Shootings happen within and near dorms, often arising from pity disputes. At Indiana State University a student was shot by another ISU student inside a residence hall. Near a dorm of Northern Arizona University, an 18-year-old killed one student and wounded three in a shooting in 2015. A student at Mid-Atlantic Christian University was shot to death inside a campus dormitory by another student. A 20-year-old student at Swarthorne College in Pennsylvania used a shotgun to kill another student after his dorm mates urinated on his mattress. Even more insignificant triggers can lead to tragedy among students. At Tennessee State University, in 2015, one person was killed and three others were wounded in a shooting that may have stemmed from an argument over a dice game.

Classrooms are also not free of students disputes. A senior-year undergraduate student was shot and killed in a classroom at Purdue University in 2014. And we are all too familiar with the shooting at Umpqua Community College when a 26-year-old student shot and killed nine people and wounded nine others in a classroom before fatally shooting himself.

Guns make Teaching Hospitals unsafe. Misplaced blame is well known in medical professions. As a veterinary surgeon I see clients at some of the most vulnerable times of their lives. Irrational responses to the trauma of a grave prognosis or to losing a pet is frequent and understandable. And although the majority of these reactions are non-threatening, some are frightening. Grieving people can misplace blame. Hearing “I wish I had my gun...”, or “if I had my gun you all would get what you deserve...” is disturbing. I’ve heard that in Teaching Hospitals. I saw the distraught faces of staff to whom these threats were directed. And I don’t think it’s incorrect to assume that these events, albeit rare, also happen at human teaching hospitals. Students, residents, and staff are not prepared to face these situations, and should not fear gun violence. Guns don’t belong in Teaching Hospitals.

Not all gun violence is intentional. Unintentional shootings are a major concern when guns are present on campuses, even in the hands of the permit holders.

In Idaho, just a few months after the passage of a 2014 law that forced Idaho colleges to allow individuals to carry guns on campus, a professor with a permit unintentionally shot himself in the leg during a chemistry lab.⁴ In 2016, a permit-holding student in Texas unintentionally discharged his gun in his dorm room just weeks after a guns-on-campus law went into effect.⁵ In 2017, a Utah student with a concealed carry permit reached into his backpack and unintentionally fired his gun in a campus cafeteria, hitting a table and light fixture. It was the second incident of unintentional gunfire on the campus in two years.⁶ In 2019, a Georgia student unintentionally shot and wounded himself in a campus lounge.⁷

SB 554-A also addresses Secure Storage of Firearms with the potential of shifting to safer a currently wide spread culture of irresponsible gun ownership.

Responsible gun owners know the risks of unsecured firearms, and keep their guns locked or stored in safes. However, 54% of gun owners do not lock their guns, and 4.6 million children live in households with unlocked guns.^{8,9}

In addition, an estimated 200,000 to 500,000 guns are stolen every year, and many are funneled to the underground market, where they typically end up in the hands of criminals.¹⁰ Gun owners who legally bought their guns are unintentionally feeding the black market by not securing their firearms to prevent theft.

A very close to home example happened this past summer. A few blocks from my house, a young man returning from an afternoon spent shooting with friends found his car broken into. Three AR15s, four handguns, a shotgun and what

he described as a lot of ammunition, were stolen from his car. A police report was filed, but the guns were not recovered in spite of the assignment of an investigator. City police, I was told, rarely assign investigators to gun thefts because they happen too often, and guns are never found.

Negligence allowed those guns to be stolen. This is also the same negligence that allows people experiencing mental health crises to kill themselves or others. This is the same negligence that results in child and teen suicide.

A heartbreaking example of the consequences of an unsecured gun is the tragic loss of a friend's 10-year-old grandson. Michael found the gun his father had purchased to protect the family, and shot himself. His lifeless body was found by siblings, two younger than him. As my friend puts it, her son wanted to protect his family from danger. He didn't know the danger that shattered his family would come from within. They now carry the grief of the loss of a child and live under a shadow of guilt.

A common misconception is that locking guns defeats the purpose of owning a gun for self-defense. The truth is that it only takes a matter of seconds to unlock a gun.¹¹ My friend's son would quickly have access to his locked gun if needed. But it would have stopped her grandson's impulsive act.

I and others are testifying to remind you that these are not hypothetical scenarios. This is the reality we live with. We can do better if we face the problem responsibly and objectively. Gun violence prevention advocates have advocated for the concepts on this bill in the past, and we will continue to work tirelessly to help make our communities safer. Oregonians deserve it!

Please **vote yes** on SB 554-A and send it to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation.

I appreciate this opportunity to be heard, and I thank you for your attention and time.

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2. Matthew R. Hassett, Bitna Kim, and Chunghyeon Seo, "Attitudes toward Concealed Carry of Firearms on Campus: A Systematic Review of the Literature," *Journal of School Violence* 19, no. 1 (2020): 48–61, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2019.1703717>
3. <https://everytownresearch.org/report/guns-on-campus/>
4. Associated Press, "Idaho State University Teacher Accidentally Shoots Self in Class," *CBS News*, September 4, 2014, <http://every.tw/188lNOu>
5. Claire Cardona, "Tarleton State Student Accidentally Fires Gun in Campus Dorm," *Dallas Morning News*, September 15, 2016, <https://bit.ly/3mGziSB>.
6. Luke Ramseth, "UVU Student Accidentally Discharges Firearm near Campus Restaurants; No One Injured," *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 26, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2qj103T>
7. Gabriela Miranda, "UGA Community Debates Gun Law after Accidental Shooting on Campus," *The Red & Black*, October 24, 2019, <https://bit.ly/37pknc>
8. Child and Teen Gun Safety <https://everytownresearch.org/issue/child-teen-safety>
9. Grossman DC, et al. Gun storage practices and risk of youth suicide and unintentional firearm injuries. *JAMA*. 2005;293(6):707–714
10. Secure Gun Storage <https://everytownresearch.org/solution/responsible-gun-storage/>
11. Hung E. 4 best bedside pistol gun safes for quick access. Pew Tactical. January 23, 2019. <https://bit.ly/2Rb2Dil>.