



February 5, 2023

Members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care
Oregon State House of Representatives
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: HB 2757 - SUPPORT

Dear Chair Nosse, Vice-Chairs Goodwin, Nelson, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Everytown for Gun Safety, and the Oregon chapters of Moms Demand Action and Students Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, I'm writing to express our support for HB 2757, which will provide long-term, sustainable funding for Oregon's 988 suicide prevention and crisis emergency response system, so all Oregonians experiencing mental health crises can access prompt, life-saving care.

The nexus between gun violence and suicide is undeniable, and Oregon is experiencing a gun suicide crisis. About 81% of gun deaths in Oregon are suicides – compared to 59% of all gun deaths in the US.¹ Everytown tracks gun suicides by US Congressional district, and of the 11 districts with more than 100 gun suicides per year, 2 are in Oregon.² These are largely rural districts with relatively small populations, which makes the data even more stark.

In 2020, the federal government established "988" as the new three-digit number for mental health crisis hotlines. Switching to an easy-to-remember 988 as the "911" for suicide prevention and mental health crisis services will ensure Americans in crisis have access to the help they need. The 988 hotline will connect callers with around-the-clock intervention, including mobile crisis support teams staffed by mental health professionals and trained peers.

But states must ensure their 988 call centers and crisis response services are adequately funded to meet the demand. With calls to existing suicide prevention call centers skyrocketing because of the COVID-19 pandemic, HB 2757 will ensure the state is prepared to answer the calls of Oregonians in need. A comprehensive crisis response system can prevent tragedy, save money, and increase access to appropriate care. We also strongly support provisions in HB 2757 requiring call center staff to reflect the demographics of the communities they serve, which takes a step forward in addressing the systemic inequities in our mental health system. It is for these reasons that we strongly support HB 2757, and we urge you to pass this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sarah Sumadi".

Sarah Sumadi, Associate Regional Director for State Government Affairs
Everytown for Gun Safety, Moms Demand Action, Students Demand Action
450 Lexington Ave.
New York, NY 10163
ssumadi@everytown.org

¹ <https://everystat.org/#Oregon>

² CD 2 and 4: <https://everytownresearch.org/report/firearm-suicide-by-congressional-district/>