

March 1, 2023

Members of the Joint Committee on Ways & Means Subcommittee on Public Safety:
Joint Committee on Ways & Means
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: DOJ BUDGET REQUEST, PACKAGE 305 and 258, SB 5514 - SUPPORT

Dear Co-Chairs Sollman, Evans and Honorable Members of the Joint Committee on Ways & Means Subcommittee on Public Safety:

On behalf of the Oregon Chapter of Moms Demand Action, I am writing to express our support for the DOJ's budget requests that directly support gun violence prevention efforts, package 305 and 258. Oregonians want to keep their families safe. Our gun laws can only be effective if they're robustly implemented. Adding a resource prosecutor and a criminal investigator within the DOJ to help law enforcement and other stakeholders better implement our state's extreme risk and background check laws will save lives. This budget request is just another step the Oregon Legislature can take to help protect Oregon families and communities.

As the daily headlines remind us, those in danger of harming themselves or others often show clear advance warning signs. Firearm suicide is a public health crisis in the United States. Every year, nearly 25,000 Americans die by firearm suicide, including more than 3,100 young Americans. Nearly six out of every 10 gun deaths in the US are suicides, an average of 65 deaths a day.¹ Here in Oregon, 79% of gun deaths are suicides and 17% are homicides. This is compared to 57% and 40% nationally.² Extreme Risk laws empower community members to act on those signs. They authorize law enforcement, and family members or household members, to work with the courts here in Oregon to temporarily remove a person's guns during moments of crisis.³

Extreme Risk laws exist at the state level. So far, 19 states and the District of Columbia have Extreme Risk laws including Oregon—meaning that nearly half the U.S. population lives in a state with this policy. The lack of public awareness using this law as a tool for suicide prevention is impeding its success in Oregon. A law is only helpful if there is awareness of the law. Since its passage in 2017 by a bipartisan legislature with implementation on January 1, 2018, Oregon's Extreme Risk law is not widely known by the public and even by some law enforcement agencies. As a volunteer with Moms Demand Action who works on public awareness of this law, I am amazed that this effective tool is not more utilized in Oregon. The state must make a sustained investment in Community Violence Intervention Programs, which address the root causes of homicides and suicides before they start. Last session, we advocated for you to fund

¹ <https://everytownresearch.org/report/extreme-risk-laws-save-lives/>

² <https://everystat.org>

³ <https://onethingyoucando.org/#states-info>

the state's first-ever statewide community violence intervention fund, and the legislature allocated \$15 million. Please ensure the DOJ has adequate staffing to administer this lifesaving program. We will also be advocating this session for a renewal of the \$15 million in grant funding itself in the biennial budget.

It is for these reasons that we strongly support the DOJ's budget requests that directly support gun violence prevention efforts, package 305 & 258, SB 5514.

Best,

Debbie Lindgren

Volunteer Lead for Public Education & Outreach, Oregon Chapter for Moms Demand Action

Lake Oswego, Oregon