



March 7, 2023

Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Weber, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education

My name is Michael Smith. I am a resident of Multnomah County and currently serve as Chair of the Gun Owners Caucus of the Democratic Party of Oregon. I write today on behalf of the Gun Owners Caucus to express our support for SB 551.

On March 3rd, the Caucus considered whether to support or oppose several bills before the State Legislature that pertain to firearms. Among these is SB 551, relating to secure storage information available on school district websites. The vote to support this bill was unanimous, and this reflects our belief that distributing information about the safe storage of firearms through our schools represents a positive, evidence-based measure towards reducing firearm injuries and deaths. Frankly, we wish that this information would be distributed as widely as possible, if necessary through public service announcements.

Opponents of this measure have stated their concern that this bill, if enacted, would turn schools into a vehicle for anti-gun propaganda. We do not share that concern, but neither do we dismiss it. Indeed, the bill mentions "specified information" but does not itself specify the information to be shared, and we believe this represents a weakness. It is our sense that this bill would best serve Oregonians if the information included is as helpful and comprehensive as possible. Therefore strongly recommend that the information provided include the following:

- Specific recommendations on how to store one's firearms in order to comply with Oregon's Safe Storage Law, including the use of quick access safes for self defense firearms.
- Proper use of cable locks and trigger locks, particularly that for most models it is unsafe to use these on loaded firearms.

- Specific recommendations on how to transfer firearms for safekeeping purposes only, such that both the owner and the holder are not criminally liable.
- For children in particular:
  - If you see a gun out in the open, such as lying on a table, walk away and tell an adult.
  - Always assume guns are loaded.
  - Never stand in front of a gun, and never point a gun at anything you don't intend to kill or destroy.
  - Never touch the trigger of a gun unless you are ready to shoot in an activity supervised by an adult. When you do shoot, make sure you know what you are aiming at, and what lies beyond it.

The last three bullet points are slightly modified versions of the Four Rules of Gun Safety as stated by firearms trainer Jeff Cooper. By way of background, the Four Rules of Gun Safety are considered fundamental to the safe use of firearms. We believe that everyone, regardless of whether they own firearms, should be aware of these rules.

In conclusion, we believe that SB 551, if done right, would make a huge difference in firearms safety in Oregon. We urge its swift passage.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Smith, Chair, DPO Gun Owners' Caucus