

Submitter: Allison Bernaldez
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure: HB2006

Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Andersen and Wallan, and Members of the Judiciary House Committee, my name is Allison Bernaldez and I am writing in support of House Bill 2006, relating to firearms. Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony about why it is critical to support raising the age for purchase and possession of semiautomatic firearms.

I am a parent of three young children. Gun violence in the United States has always been frightening to me, but it's become exponentially more worrisome since becoming a parent. Knowing that firearm-related injuries became the leading cause of death for children and adolescents in 2020 causes me to lose sleep at night. I make sure to give my kids a hug and a kiss and tell them that I love them every morning before they go to school, primarily because the thought is always in the back of my head that there are countless numbers of parents in this country who have sent their kids off to school and they never got to see them alive again. There are far too many school shooting incidents to name here, and that has left a permanent pit in my stomach.

Currently, in Oregon, 18-to-20-year-olds can buy assault weapons and other semiautomatic rifles – even though they cannot legally purchase handguns. Research shows that people aged 18-to-20 years old commit gun homicides at a rate nearly 3 times more than adults 21-and-over (2). Furthermore, research also shows that human brains do not finish developing and maturing until the mid-to-late 20s, and the prefrontal cortex, which is critical to understanding consequences of one's actions and helping control impulses, is one of the last parts to mature (3, 4). We need to follow the science and historical evidence, which suggests people whose brains have not fully developed may not be capable of handling the immense responsibility of owning a semiautomatic firearm.

I hope we can count on you to help save lives by raising the age to purchase and possess semiautomatic rifles to 21 years old, by supporting HB 2006.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Allison Bernaldez

(1): <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc2201761>

(2): <https://everytownresearch.org/rankings/law/minimum-age-to-purchase/>

- (3): <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/the-teen-brain-7-things-to-know>
- (4): <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/06/03/why-so-many-mass-shooters-young-angry-men/>