

Submitter: Caitlin Van Patten
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure: HB2006

Van Patten Support HB 2006 - Raise the age for purchase and possession of semiautomatic firearms

Dear Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Anderson and Wallan and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Caitlin Van Patten, and I am writing in support of HB 2006 to raise the age for purchase and possession of semiautomatic firearms.

I am a mother of a precocious, goofy, an infinitely sweet 18 month old. My family hopes to welcome our second child in the fall. I also work for an international humanitarian assistance organization, where I have the privilege of traveling the world and working with colleagues from all over. Last year, a colleague was in town from Europe and as a new mother I asked her if she ever is overcome by an overwhelming dread for her child's future, what might happen if they are at school, a store, a theater, walking down the street, the wrong place at the wrong time? If she ever listens to the news and feels devastated at the loss of another parent, at the back of her mind thinking one day it could be you? The ideas, the feelings, were foreign to her and I realized that as a parent here I walk around with a weight and a worry most parents around the world do not bear.

At 10 years old, I lived in a rural Colorado town during the Columbine High School shooting. After that mass shootings and gun violence seemed to become a reality in America many have come to accept. In high school in McMinnville, I spent 2 hours standing silently in a closet in my physics classroom sardined in with my classmates who could fit when someone with a semiautomatic firearm was spotted around our campus and we went into lockdown. I spent my school years going through countless active shooter drills, where once an English teacher told our class, "If this actually happens, we aren't doing these protocols - I am throwing a chair through the window and everyone is jumping out." I started college in the wake of the Virginia Tech shooting. Driving home from a night shift bartending in SE Portland, I heard the real time breaking news of the Pulse nightclub shooting. These shooting have become too numerous to count, but every one has had a visceral impact and punctuated different periods of my life. From 2013-2015 I lived in Rwanda and people are often surprised when I tell them I felt safer in daily life there than I do here in Oregon. I witnessed shootings in the US from an outside perspective and was able to reflect on the absurdity of their frequency and how it isn't a reality everywhere. I have been asked with perplexity by colleagues in Uganda and elsewhere about shootings in

America and the ability to purchase semiautomatic firearms.

Young people 18-20 commit homicides at a rate 3 times that of older age groups. Recent reports of shootings are often followed with "the gun was purchased legally". HB 2006 is a reasonable way to reduce the harm caused by these firearms and bring a bit more peace of mind to Oregonians. Seven states have already approved this.

Please support this measure as well as HB 2005, prohibiting ghost guns and other untraceable firearms, as well as HB 2007, further enhancing the ability of local governments to limit firearms in sensitive areas.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Caitlin Van Patten