



MEMORANDUM

To: Rep. Jason Kropf, Chair, House Judiciary Committee
Rep. Tom Andersen, Vice-Chair, House Judiciary Committee
Rep. Kim Wallan, Vice-Chair, House Judiciary Committee
Members of the House Judiciary Committee

From: Courtni Dresser, Vice President of Government Relations

Date: March 23, 2023

Re: OMA Comments in Support of HB 2006 – Prohibiting persons under 21 from possessing firearms

The Oregon Medical Association (OMA) strongly supports HB 2006 which prohibits persons under the age of 21 years old from possessing firearms with several specified exceptions. This bill also prohibits the sale or transfer of firearms to a person one should reasonably know is under 21 years of age. These offenses would become a Class A misdemeanor punishable with under 1 year imprisonment and/or a \$6,250 fine.

Increasing gun violence, including suicide by firearm, greatly impacts the health and well-being of communities across our state. As a result, the OMA has been, and continues to be, active in the effort to prevent unnecessary injury and death from firearms.

In 2018, the OMA launched a task force centered on firearm related injuries in the state of Oregon to determine how our organization should be engaged in the issue of firearms based on science and research. The following year, our Firearms Injury Prevention Task Force recommended the OMA adopt the following positions on firearm safety measures that directly relate to HB 2006:

- Methods to reduce firearm-related injuries and deaths should be broad and comprehensive.
- Deaths and injuries related to firearms are preventable.
- Effective screening, assessment, counseling, and restricted access to firearms among high-risk individuals can preserve life and function.

- Addressing key factors, including mental health crises, domestic violence, and alcohol misuse, are important aspects of reducing firearm injury.

In the state of Oregon and as a national average, 50 to 60 percent of suicides by our teens and young adults are carried out with a firearm. Death and injury are often instantaneous when firearms are utilized and do not allow ample time for an individual to reconsider the act of gun violence. Science tells us the development of the pre-frontal cortex area of the brain, which is responsible for judgement, reasoning, planning, and impulse control, is not complete until roughly the age of 25 years old. This means that young adults under the age of 21 may lack the ability to fully weigh the consequences of their actions. This makes the ability to legally purchase a firearm at 18 years old a concern for our communities.

The OMA respects our constitutional right the bears arms under the Second Amendment and many of our members are gun owners themselves. That said, we believe society also has the responsibility to protect our youth and the community at large when possible, and the adoption of HB 2006 will help in that endeavor.

For these reasons, the OMA asks you to pass HB 2006.

The Oregon Medical Association (OMA) is the state's largest professional organization engaging in advocacy, policy, community-building, and networking opportunities for Oregon's physicians, physician assistants, medical students, and physician assistant students. The OMA's members speak with one voice as they advocate for policies that improve access to quality patient care, reduce administrative burdens on medical professionals, and improve the health of all Oregonians. Additional information can be found at www.theOMA.org.