

## **Written Brief Testimony Supporting An Amended Version of Oregon HB 3513**

### **82<sup>nd</sup> Oregon Legislative Assembly 2023 Regular Session**

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I am writing in support Oregon HB 3513, to encourage Oregon Federal Firearm Licensees to provide voluntary, temporary out of home secure firearm storage to Oregon gun owners with amended language about negligence and/or negligent entrustment.

I am an Oregonian, born and raised in Beaverton, Oregon – where today I live and operate my woman-owned small business with my husband and kids.

In 1997 I experienced my first suicide loss when a dear friend, Alex died by firearm suicide in her family home at the age of 14.

Over the course of my career as first an intern and then later as Licensed Clinical Social Worker I have had the experience of working with countless kids, teens, families, civilians, service members, Veterans and their loved ones. The focus of my career has been providing direct clinical care to people in crisis- emotional, physical, mental, substance related and spiritual crisis to include suicidal crisis and to advance organizational strategies to prevent, intervene and respond to suicide risk.

I have gained expertise about suicide prevention and have had the honor and privilege of working to advance suicide prevention strategies across various organizations and sectors including the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, private healthcare, and non-profit organizations.

What I can tell you this bill – with some amendments as mentioned- would do is - provide an option to gun owners who are at risk for suicide themselves and/or know of someone in their life who is – with a legal, secure, temporary, and voluntary option to save lives. We - the community of experts dedicated to firearm injury prevention, suicide prevention, community wellness and public health absolutely need to partner with the firearm industry and gun owners to save lives. It is estimated there are more firearms in the United States than people.

People in suicidal crisis most often survive that crisis if they don't have quick access to a lethal means. These crises are short in duration, often involve alcohol or other substances and respond well to creating safety plans. Most firearm related deaths in Oregon are suicides. Most suicides among those who have served – Veterans- or are serving in the United States military – and their family members- are by firearm. Firearm related deaths are now the leading cause of death for our youth. In all the years I've been working to prevention suicide- some things I know for certain- crisis happen to anyone- people who are in suicidal crisis and even those like Alex who die, don't want to die...they want their pain to end. Often that pain is a mix of emotional, mental, physical, spiritual and substance related pain.

Most gun owners are choosing to own for their own protection and for the protection of their family. Unfortunately, many gun owners do not realize that by storing firearms in the home their family has increased risk for suicide – a crisis that is far more likely than defending against an intruder or having their firearms stolen.

Federal firearm licenses- the ranges and retailers in our communities could provide life-saving storage to their communities. We should be encouraging this partnership and building effective, safe communication campaigns so that Oregonians know about the resource and how to use it.

Let us work together in communities to provide more options for secure firearm suicide prevention.

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