

OREGON ATTORNEY GENERAL'S SEXUAL ASSAULT TASK FORCE



SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY SUPPORT SUPPORT SB 1503

FEBRUARY 8, 2024

SUBMITTED BY: OREGON SEXUAL ASSAULT TASK FORCE

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

Greetings. Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on SB 1503, establishing a task force to address community safety and violence prevention in Oregon.

I am writing to you as the Executive Director of Oregon Sexual Assault Task Force (Oregon SATF), an organization dedicated to compassionately responding to and preventing sexual violence and abuse. **On behalf of our agency, we urge your support of SB 1503.**

The Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force is a private, non-profit, non-governmental statewide agency (501c-3 nonprofit), operating four programs and coordinating over 100 statewide multi-disciplinary members who serve as advisors on our Task Force Advisory Committee: Advocacy Response, Campus, Criminal Justice, Legislative & Public Policy, Medical-Forensic, Men's Engagement, Offender Management, and Prevention Education.

Our mission is to facilitate and support a collaborative, survivor-centered approach to the prevention of and response to sexual violence. We accomplish our mission by advancing primary prevention and providing multi-disciplinary training and technical assistance to responders in Oregon and nationally.

The connection between violence (particularly gun violence and suicide), healthcare, and our mission-driven work to ensure that every Oregonian lives and flourishes in a healthy, safe community could not be clearer. Ending violence and abuse is not possible without addressing all forms of violence, including suicide and gun violence. **We urge your attention to the critical overlap between gun violence and sexual violence. It is imperative that we recognize and address this complex relationship with comprehensive policies, centered on preventing the violence from happening in the first place.**

The statistics are stark: studies consistently demonstrate a correlation between gun ownership and increased rates of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, suicide, and femicide. The presence of a firearm in cases of domestic violence significantly heightens the risk of homicide for women.

Furthermore, individuals who commit acts of sexual violence often utilize firearms as a means of intimidation and coercion, exacerbating the trauma experienced by survivors.

To effectively combat this dual crisis, a proactive approach is essential. Prevention must be our primary focus. The creation of a task force to address policies related to the prevention of violence with a specific focus on ensuring healthy, safe communities is an imperative step to ensuring our state takes a proactive approach to our current societal epidemic of violence and abuse.

We encourage the task force to not only focus on the overlapping factors between sexual violence, gun violence, and community health outcomes, but to also examine and recommend robust policy measures (such as those that restrict access to firearms for those with a history of domestic or sexual violence, other person-centered crimes that demonstrate increased risk to lethality (like stalking), or individuals deemed at high-risk for committing acts of violence, or attempting suicide).

Additionally, we must invest in comprehensive sexual violence prevention programs that address the root causes of violence and promote healthy relationships and consent education from an early age. By fostering a culture of respect, accountability, and continual learning, we can challenge harmful attitudes and behaviors that perpetuate both sexual violence, abuse, and gun violence.

Additionally, we must prioritize funding for survivor support services, including counseling, advocacy, and legal assistance, to ensure that survivors have the resources and support they need to heal and seek justice.

In conclusion, the connections between gun violence and sexual violence demand urgent action. By enacting policies that prioritize prevention of violence before it occurs (such as the creation of this task force), we can work towards a safe, equitable society for all Oregonians. **On behalf of our agency and my colleagues, I urge you to support SB 1503.**

Thank you for your attention to this crucial matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shannon Rose". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Shannon Rose

Executive Director

director@oregonsatf.org