

Chair Prozanski and Members of the Committee:

I am writing today in support of SB 1503, the Task Force bill on gun violence prevention and firearm suicide prevention.

I am a retired clinical and palliative care chaplain, and pastor ordained in the United Church of Christ. As the former Interim President of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, the largest state church council in the nation, I offered public witness to my support for gun violence prevention during the last two legislative sessions.

And now seeing the alarming increase of preventable firearm deaths, especially suicides, I join so many others in saying something must be done and now.

Every year, we lose close to 600 Oregonians to preventable firearm deaths. Black Oregonians are roughly 10 times more likely than white people to die by firearm homicide. And the firearm suicide rate in rural Oregon is 2.5 times higher than in urban areas and the state's veteran suicide rate is 37% higher than the national average.

These statistics are further alarming and must be stemmed. The loss of life by any type of preventable violence is crushing to families and loved ones – and even to the public at large and the ones with the political will – all who in a sense are complicit in allowing such violence to continue.

I strongly support the SB1503, Task Force bill, and urge the Task Force to prioritize prevention efforts that are centered around those most impacted by gun deaths and shootings, as well as firearm suicides. I urge the Task Force to analyze and prioritize ongoing, sustainable funding for efforts for prevention work that is making the most meaningful, equitable impact, both for homicide and suicide prevention.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony on this issue.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Andea Cano

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