

HB 3075 Testimony - Diane Peterson

I've been an advocate to prevent gun tragedies ever since 2015, when nine Black people were massacred by a white supremacist after he sat with them for an hour in bible study at church in Charleston, South Carolina. Two months later, two journalists were shot and killed on live TV in my hometown of Moneta, Virginia. The person they were interviewing was shot and wounded, but survived. She is the mother of a friend of mine from high school. At that time, I was eight months pregnant with my first child. These events converged in me like a lightning rod, sparking my awareness that gun deaths and injuries were escalating in our communities and must be addressed.

Since that time, I have consistently worked to raise awareness about the truth of gun tragedies, including these fundamental points:

1. Gun deaths and injuries are a public health crisis, are preventable, and must be addressed by evidence-based policies.
2. The mental and emotional trauma of survivors and all who have been impacted by gun tragedies is widespread and incalculable.
3. Guns are now the leading cause of death for young people in the United States. This is unforgivable.
4. Mass shootings traumatize our communities and make us live in fear, but most gun deaths are suicides. In Oregon, nearly 80 percent of gun deaths are suicides, with rates highest in rural areas and among Veterans, and on the rise among youth.
5. Black Americans are disproportionately impacted by gun deaths and injury. Black men in Oregon are 15 times more likely to die by gun homicide than white men.
6. The evidence shows that strong gun laws save lives. This is especially important in states with high gun ownership.
7. This issue is seen as divisive but the reality is 70% of Oregonians agree with meaningful gun policies. So much of the division is because the gun lobby spreads false narratives designed to sell guns. If people really understood the key facts of Measure 114 - making sure there were completed background checks - most people would likely support it. We all want to live in communities where we feel safe. We must take action to make that a reality for all Oregonians.

Measure 114 was voted into law by a majority of Oregonians in 2022, and has been found constitutional in both state and federal court. HB 3075 will help ensure its smooth implementation, giving state agencies like law enforcement the resources they need to put it into place. Let's pass HB 3075 and start making Oregon a safer place to live.