

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 243. This bill imposes further restrictions on law-abiding gun owners while doing nothing to address the root causes of firearm-related deaths in Oregon. Instead of making our communities safer, it undermines our constitutional rights and fails to tackle the real issues—mental health and violent crime.

I live in a high-crime area where gangs, homeless encampments, and mentally ill individuals flood the streets and parks. Law enforcement is stretched thin, and violent crime continues to rise. This is the reality for many Oregonians, yet SB 243 would make it harder for responsible citizens to defend themselves while doing nothing to stop the criminals who ignore the law.

On July 5, 2020, my family had a terrifying reminder of why self-defense is critical. In broad daylight, my husband, daughter, and I were on our way to feed our animals on our farm. As we sat at a stop sign waiting to turn right, we were caught in the middle of a shooting. Bullets were flying in every direction, and several hit our Toyota 4Runner. Thankfully, my husband had installed an aftermarket bumper, which prevented the bullets from penetrating the vehicle. That bumper very likely saved our lives that day.

The county sheriff later confirmed that the shooters were gang members, and they knew who they were. Yet nothing was done. The trauma my family—especially my young daughter—endured that day is something no one should have to experience. Before my husband or I could even reach for our legally owned firearms, the shooters had already sped off. That day, we were lucky. But it reinforced my commitment to always carry and protect my family, because when seconds count, law enforcement is often minutes away.

SB 243 not only infringes on my Second Amendment rights, but it also places my family and countless others at greater risk by making it harder for law-abiding citizens to defend themselves. Criminals do not obey gun laws. Taking rights away from responsible gun owners does nothing to prevent violent crime.

Senate Republican Leader Daniel Bonham correctly pointed out that the vast majority of firearm-related deaths in Oregon are suicides, not homicides. Between 2019 and 2023, 77% of the state's 3,125 firearm deaths were suicides. Yet, Oregon ranks among the worst states for access to mental health care. If we want to reduce gun deaths, we should be focusing on improving mental health services and cracking down on violent crime, not restricting the rights of responsible gun owners.

Additionally, this bill disproportionately harms responsible gun owners, including hunters and youth involved in shooting sports. My family has a deep tradition of hunting, which provides food for our table and teaches responsibility, safety, and conservation. My 9-year-old daughter recently harvested her first cow elk under the Mentored Youth Hunter Program, an experience that fostered discipline and respect for firearms. The bill's ban on firearm possession for those under 21 threatens these programs and punishes responsible young hunters.

Gun-free zones do not protect our communities—they make them more vulnerable. A sign declaring an area “gun-free” does nothing to stop criminals; it only disarms those who would otherwise be able to defend themselves and others in an emergency. Time and time again, we have seen that mass shootings often occur in these so-

called “gun-free zones,” where law-abiding citizens are left defenseless.

Furthermore, SB 243 directly infringes on our Second Amendment rights. The Constitution is clear: “the right of the people to keep and bear Arms shall not be infringed.” The courts have repeatedly upheld the fundamental right to self-defense. Passing more laws that restrict responsible gun owners while failing to address crime and mental health is not the answer.

I urge you to oppose SB 243 and instead focus on real solutions, such as expanding mental health resources, enforcing existing laws against violent criminals, and protecting the rights of responsible gun owners. Oregonians deserve policies that actually enhance public safety, not ineffective restrictions that punish law-abiding citizens.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Jodi Bissonette