

ALLIANCE FOR A
SAFE OREGON.
ACTION

March 27, 2025

To: Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Senate Judiciary Committee Members

From: Jess Marks
Executive Director
Alliance for a Safe Oregon Action

Re: Support for SB243

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Senate Judiciary Committee :

I ask for support of SB243 to take real action to prevent firearm suicides in our state. On average, we lose almost 500 Oregonians each year to firearm suicide, 80% of our total gun tragedies. Oregon's firearm suicide rate is 40% higher than the national average, 11.0 gun suicides per 100,000 in Oregon compared to 7.1 gun suicides per 100,000 nationally.

Those in our rural communities, our Veterans, and our Tribal community members are most impacted, with our most rural communities facing firearm suicide rates 3x higher than our most urban. Oregon Veterans firearm suicide rates are 1.5x than national average, and already double civilian rates. We have lost more post 9/11 Veterans to firearm suicide than were lost in combat for those wars.

People often assume if someone wants to die by suicide, they will. In reality, means matter and firearms are nearly 90% lethal. This means, there is very rarely a second chance. If people do substitute another means, those means are much less fatal, and most people tend to survive those attempts. The data consistently shows there are often not warning signs. Extensive research has tried to analyze and create predictive modeling for suicide risk. What that research has found over and over, is that while suicide is not predictable, it can be prevented, primarily by reducing access to firearms and other lethal means during a period of acute risk. This is why I am here to ask you to support SB438.

There is extensive evidence that waiting periods for firearm purchases—mandatory delays between the initiation and completion of a gun sale—can significantly reduce

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firearm-related suicides. The most conclusive evidence shows mandatory purchase delays reduced firearm-related suicides by between 5 to 11%, leading to a statistically significant reduction of total suicides by all means.

Further supporting evidence comes from a 2015 study examining changes in handgun laws in Connecticut and Missouri. Connecticut's implementation of a de facto waiting period was associated with a 15.4% reduction in firearm suicide rates, while Missouri's repeal correlated with a 16.1% increase in these rates.

In Oregon, this would be between 25 to 55 lives saved each year. These aren't numbers. These are our family members, our Veterans and Service members, our grandfathers, our children.

A significant portion of suicide attempts are made impulsively, and the acute period for suicide risk is often very short, minutes or hours long. This is one of the key reasons waiting periods are effective; they deter impulsive acts.

These are effective policies that save lives and prevent tragedies that devastate not just families but communities. The US Supreme Court has articulated that policies like waiting periods both align with the 2nd amendment and our country's historic regulation of firearms.

In the past decade, we have lost far too many Oregonians to tragedies we could have prevented.

I urge you to pass SB243.