

Thank you, Representatives Tran and Chaichi for Sponsoring House Bill 3884, and Thank you Chair Kropf, Vice Chairs Chotzen and Wallen and Committee members for allowing me time today. I am Angela Perry, Board Member for the Oregon Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, or AFSP, and I am testifying today in support of House Bill 3884 regarding Firearm Holds.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention is dedicated to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide, including those who have experienced a loss. AFSP creates a culture that values mental health through public education and community programs, develops suicide prevention through research and advocacy, and provides support for those affected by suicide. As the nation's largest private funder of suicide prevention research, we know that suicide is a leading yet preventable public health problem. AFSP supports the implementation of voluntary removal initiatives including temporary transfer exceptions and community storage options, as important pieces of suicide prevention.

We know that access to lethal means during a suicidal crisis is strongly linked to suicide. Firearms are the most often used method of suicide and have the highest suicide fatality rate with 85-90% ending in death. Restricting access to firearms has consistently been linked to reduced suicide. Nationally, 49,316 lives were lost to suicide in 2023 and 888 of these deaths were in Oregon. That year in Oregon, 55% of suicide deaths were by firearms, and 76% of all firearms deaths were suicides.

Research shows us that putting time and distance between a person at risk and the lethal method can save their life. When people at risk of suicide are unable to access their intended lethal suicide method, most will not attempt suicide with another method. Temporary restriction of access to a firearm during a time of increased risk gives individuals in crisis something they desperately need: time for the intense suicidal risk to diminish and time for someone else to intervene with mental health support and resources. People considering suicide typically feel conflicted about living; part of them wants to live, but part of them is focused on dying to stop the unbearable pain they are experiencing.

We need to establish limited liability protections for federal firearm licensees to enter into firearm hold agreements with gunowners who are seeking to voluntarily store their firearms securely. Research shows one of the biggest concerns of licensees is the possibility of being held liable for what happens after they return the gun to the gunowner. This bill will remove that barrier from those who are trying to help, and it will add a barrier of safety for those who are struggling.

As a firearm owner, and someone who lives with chronic suicidal ideation, I do not know why anyone would object to doing anything to help to keep their loved one safe. For those who have lost a loved one...wouldn't you give anything to be able to bring them back? I would hope that my friends and family members would do what they could to help keep me safe and alive...to be able to make it just a little bit harder for me to have access to my firearm when I was in a suicidal mindset. As a person who struggles, I KNOW that I want my access to be hindered, with locks, with removal from my home...whether it is for a few hours or a few days. This is a step to help provide an extra tool to keep a person who is struggling with their mental health safe.

This bill provides a lifeline to that part of them that wants to live and saves their loved ones and communities from the devastating impact of their suicide. Whether it is to keep themselves safe, their spouses, partners, friends, or even their children. I urge you to support House Bill 3884, to allow it to be shown just how much of an impact it can have on saving the lives of fellow Oregonians. Thank you for your time.