

Submitter:

Andrew Hall

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Judiciary

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

SB697

Testimony Opposing Oregon Senate Bill 697

Submitted on April 3, 2025 I strongly oppose Senate Bill 697, which seeks to ban Oregonians aged 18 to 20 from owning firearms. This legislation undermines fundamental rights, ignores individual responsibility, and fails to address the root causes of violence, all while unfairly targeting a group of law-abiding young adults. First, this bill violates the constitutional rights of 18- to 20-year-olds. The Second Amendment guarantees the right to keep and bear arms, and courts have consistently recognized this as an individual right. At 18, citizens can vote, serve in the military, and enter contracts—clear indicators of adulthood. Many in this age group serve in our armed forces, handling firearms to defend our nation. To deny them the same rights at home is inconsistent and dismissive of their maturity and contributions. Second, SB 697 ignores data showing that most gun violence is not driven by legal firearm ownership among young adults. Studies, including from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports, indicate that violent crime is often tied to socioeconomic factors, mental health issues, and illegal firearms—not law-abiding 18- to 20-year-olds. This bill punishes a demographic without evidence that they disproportionately misuse firearms, while doing little to address actual criminal activity. Third, this legislation sets a dangerous precedent for eroding rights based on age. If 18- to 20-year-olds can be stripped of their Second Amendment rights, what stops lawmakers from targeting other rights—like free speech or voting—under the guise of safety? Rights are not contingent on arbitrary age thresholds beyond the established line of adulthood at 18. Finally, the bill overlooks the practical needs of young adults. Many in this age group live independently, work rural jobs, or face real threats requiring self-defense. Hunting and sport shooting are also lawful traditions in Oregon, and this ban would unfairly limit their participation. Education and training—not blanket bans—are the solution to ensuring responsible ownership. I urge lawmakers to reject SB 697. It's a poorly targeted measure that infringes on rights, ignores evidence, and fails to enhance safety. Focus instead on addressing mental health, enforcing existing laws, and supporting responsible gun ownership for all adult Oregonians.