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On Behalf Of: Veteran Spouse Lived experience  
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Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3884

Oregon is lagging behind in implementing evidence-based strategies to reduce Veteran suicide—and the consequences are devastating.

We currently have one of the highest Veteran suicide rates in the nation:

The national suicide average is 14.0 per 100,000 people.

The national Veteran suicide rate is 34.7 per 100,000.

That is unacceptable. We were the last state to join the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families. And now we are one of the few states struggling to pass a limited liability law to promote voluntary, out-of-home firearm storage—an evidence-based practice proven to save lives.

The need for this legislation could not be clearer.

In 2023–2024, the Oregon Firearm Safety Coalition personally contacted over 450 brick-and-mortar FFLs (federally licensed firearm dealers) across Oregon to ask if they would provide secure firearm storage. All but one said no. Over 90% cited fear of legal liability as the reason.

We commend the Stay Center, the one FFL who said yes. He has saved the lives of Veterans and community members because they chose to put people over liability. But The Stay Center cannot—and should not be expected to—serve the entire state of Oregon. This is not sustainable.

Other states—including Texas, Louisiana, and Washington—have addressed this barrier by passing limited liability laws that allow FFLs to safely and legally offer storage. These states are now building robust storage networks, and all have lower suicide rates than Oregon. This approach works. It's proven.

Just like we have Good Samaritan laws that protect people who offer CPR or administer naloxone, this law is about removing fear from lifesaving action. Without these protections, many people simply will not act—even when they want to.

So I ask not, "Why would we pass this law?"

I ask, "Why wouldn't we?"

Oregon must stop being last in line on Veteran suicide prevention. We have the data, we have the model, and we have the moral responsibility. It is time for Oregon to lead—by passing this law and building the infrastructure that saves lives.

Thank you.