

Submitter: Gregory McGill
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB697

I am an Oregon resident speaking today to voice my strong opposition to Senate Bill 697, which prohibits individuals under 21 years of age from possessing firearms, with limited exceptions. While I understand the intent behind this legislation may be to address concerns about public safety, I believe this bill is misguided, unfairly restrictive, and fails to respect the rights and responsibilities of young adults in our state.

First and foremost, this bill infringes upon the constitutional rights of law-abiding Oregonians. The Second Amendment of the United States Constitution guarantees the right to keep and bear arms, a right that does not vanish when a person turns 18 and becomes a legal adult. At 18, individuals can vote, serve in the military, enter into contracts, and be held fully accountable under the law. Yet SB 697 singles out 18- to 20-year-olds, stripping them of a fundamental right without clear evidence that this age group poses a unique threat when exercising that right responsibly. This feels less like a safety measure and more like an arbitrary punishment based solely on age.

Consider the practical implications. Many young adults in Oregon—particularly in rural areas—rely on firearms for legitimate purposes. Hunting, for example, is a tradition passed down through generations, and it often begins well before age 21. While the bill includes exceptions for certain hunting rifles and shotguns, it still bans possession of many firearms commonly used for sport, self-defense, or even competitive shooting, like high school trap shooting teams. These activities teach responsibility, discipline, and respect for firearms—values we should encourage, not restrict. By broadly prohibiting possession, SB 697 risks alienating young people who are already contributing positively to their communities.

Moreover, the bill's exceptions for police, military personnel, and National Guard members highlight an inconsistency. If an 18-year-old is trusted to carry a firearm in service to the state or nation—often in high-stakes, dangerous situations—why are they deemed unfit to possess one in their personal life? This double standard undermines the argument that age alone determines capability or maturity. If anything, it suggests that training and responsibility, not an arbitrary age cutoff, should guide who can possess firearms.

I also question the effectiveness of this measure. Proponents may point to incidents of gun violence involving young people, but laws already exist to address criminal behavior, regardless of age. SB 697 does little to target those who break the law and instead burdens law-abiding citizens. Criminals, by definition, do not follow possession laws—whether they're 18 or 80. Meanwhile, a 19-year-old single parent in a rural area, seeking a firearm for self-defense, could face jail time or a steep fine under this bill. How does that make Oregon safer?

Finally, I urge you to consider the message this sends to young adults. At a time when we ask them to step up as citizens—pay taxes, work, and build families—we're telling them they can't be trusted with the same rights as those just a few years older. This isn't about coddling or restricting; it's about recognizing that adulthood begins at 18, not 21, and treating people accordingly.

I respectfully ask the committee to reject Senate Bill 697. It's a solution in search of a problem—one that punishes the innocent, ignores root causes, and erodes the freedoms Oregonians hold dear. Let's focus on measures that address actual threats, not blanket bans that alienate and penalize our youth.

Thank you for your time and consideration.