

Testimony Against Oregon Senate Bill 696
Submitted to the Oregon Senate Committee on Rules April 5, 2025

Dear Members of the Senate Committee on Rules,

I am writing as a concerned Oregonian to express my firm opposition to Senate Bill 696. While I recognize that this bill may be pitched as a step toward improving safety or addressing societal issues, I see it as an overreach that threatens individual rights and fails to deliver practical solutions. I respectfully urge you to reject SB 696 and pursue alternatives that respect Oregonians' freedoms while tackling real problems more effectively.

One of my biggest issues with this bill is the questionable process behind its support. I've heard disturbing reports that Moms Demand Action, a well-known lobbying group, is shaping the narrative by requiring its members to submit their testimonies to the organization for approval before they can be submitted publicly. If this is true, it's a blatant attempt to control the conversation and suppress authentic voices. It means the testimony you're receiving in favor of SB 696 might not reflect the true sentiments of Oregon residents but rather a polished script from an advocacy group with its own agenda. This undermines the integrity of the legislative process and makes me doubt the grassroots support this bill claims to have.

As for SB 696 itself, I find its approach misguided. The measures it proposes—whether new regulations, limitations on rights, or added bureaucratic hurdles—seem more punitive than preventive. They burden law-abiding citizens without clear evidence that they'll make us safer. Oregon already has laws to address these concerns; what we need is better enforcement and targeted solutions, not broad strokes that penalize the innocent. This bill feels like a knee-jerk reaction rather than a thoughtful fix.

I'm also troubled by what SB 696 represents in the bigger picture. It's another move toward chipping away at our liberties under the banner of safety—a slippery slope that rarely ends in favor of the people. Instead of more restrictions, let's focus on root causes: mental health support, community programs, and education. These would do more for Oregon than another layer of rules ever could.

I ask you to hear the unfiltered opposition to SB 696, not just the curated voices pushed by groups like Moms Demand Action. This bill doesn't serve our state's best interests, and I urge you to vote no. Thank you for considering my testimony.

Harald Thomas
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