

Submitter:

Kim Evans

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Judiciary

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

SB697

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 697 (SB 697), introduced in the 2025 Regular Session, which seeks to prohibit individuals under 21 years of age from possessing firearms, with limited exceptions, and imposes penalties on those who transfer firearms to such individuals. While I understand the intent behind this legislation may be to enhance public safety, I believe it is an overly restrictive measure that infringes on the rights of responsible, law-abiding young adults, fails to address root causes of violence, and creates unnecessary burdens for Oregonians.

First, SB 697 undermines the constitutional rights of individuals aged 18 to 20. At 18, Oregonians are considered adults under the law—able to vote, serve in the military, and enter into contracts. Many in this age group rely on firearms for lawful purposes, such as hunting, sport shooting, or self-defense, particularly in rural areas of our state where these activities are deeply ingrained in the culture and economy. By broadly restricting their access to firearms, this bill effectively treats these young adults as second-class citizens, denying them freedoms afforded to those just a few years older without clear evidence that such a blanket restriction will achieve its intended goal. Why are 18 year olds able to join the armed forces and use firearms for this country but now Oregon wants to strip ADULTS over 18 until 21 years old that inherent Right?

Second, the bill does not adequately address the root causes of firearm-related incidents. Studies consistently show that violent crime is driven by complex social factors—poverty, lack of mental health resources, and inadequate community support systems—not simply by the legal possession of firearms by young adults. Oregon would be better served by investing in mental health programs, education, and community outreach rather than imposing punitive restrictions on a demographic that includes many responsible individuals. The exceptions outlined in SB 697, such as for hunting or military use, are too narrow and fail to account for the diverse circumstances in which young adults may need to exercise their rights.

Third, the penalties proposed in SB 697—up to 364 days' imprisonment and fines of \$6,250 for possession or transfer—are disproportionately harsh for what could be minor or unintentional violations. For example, a 20-year-old borrowing a rifle from a family member for a lawful hunting trip could face criminal charges if the transfer does not strictly comply with the bill's exceptions. This creates a chilling effect, discouraging lawful behavior and potentially clogging our courts with cases that do not enhance public safety.

Finally, I am concerned about the enforcement challenges this bill presents. Oregon's law enforcement agencies are already stretched thin, and adding another layer of regulation to monitor and penalize young adults for firearm possession diverts resources from more pressing priorities, such as addressing illegal firearms trafficking or violent crime.