

Portland Oregon
April 1, 2015

Senate Committee on Judiciary
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE, Room 331
Salem OR 97301
via email to sjud.exhibits@state.or.us

Re: Senate Bill 941

Dear Chair Prozanski and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony in support of Senate Bill 941, a long-overdue measure to extend background checks to private firearms sales. I have followed the course of the background check legislation closely over the last three sessions and I listened to the hearing this morning.

At times this morning, it appeared that passion was on the side of the gun advocates. Even the voices of Robert Yuille and Paul Kemp, both of whom lost family members to gun violence, seemed muted next to the booming indignation of men who had to wait on a background check for their guns or the outraged sheriff who would declared he would not enforce this clearly constitutional measure. Please do not be misled by their volume.

People whose lives have been shattered by gun violence often speak very quietly. Last December, I attended the community open house at Rosemary Anderson High School in Portland following the gang shooting that wounded four students who were standing outside over the lunch hour. Parents, students, teachers and an amazing number of alumni talked quietly in small groups, wrote cards to the wounded, hugged each other and cried. Gang shooters in their community can easily access guns, whatever their criminal record. SB 941 will make those guns harder to get.

Last October, in a small conference room in Hillsboro, a woman who used her own body to shield her 16 year-old daughter from a mentally deranged shooter, quietly urged me to work on behalf of gun law reform. At a meeting of the Clackamas County Democrats, a precinct captain whose son had been in the Aurora theater during that massacre, asked quietly about the prospects for gun reform. SB 941 addresses shooters like those.

At a small impromptu gathering in Northeast Portland church shortly after Sandy Hook, one woman described her father shooting her mother, twice. Afterwards, in a whisper, another woman told me of the years her drunken father had brandished his gun and threatened his children. SB 941 will help keep guns from men like those.

Opponents are correct about one thing -- SB 941 is about freedom. It is about the freedom to go to school, to the mall, to the movies, or to sit quietly in one's own home, free from the threat of gun violence. Please hear the voices of Oregonians who have said, quietly but in overwhelming numbers, that they support a background check on every gun sale.

Sincerely

Kathleen Pool
Portland Oregon

