

Sen. Floyd Prozanski, Chair
Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee
900 Court St. NE, Salem 97301

Chair Prozanski, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to testify today in support of Senate Bill 868, the Extreme Risk Protection Order.

My name is Lisa Bates. I am currently the Principal at Levi Anderson Learning Center, St. Mary's Home for boys. In addition, I have an LCSW and I am a trained suicide prevention trainer in ASIST. I have worked in mental health and suicide prevention for over twenty years. I am here today to testify in favor of SB 868 because I believe it will help prevent suicide and related violence by eliminating the availability of fire arms to suicidal or at risk individuals. I am passionate about suicide prevention and believe that every life matters. Suicide prevention is everyone's business and we need to work together in our communities to stop death by fire arms.

An Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) fill the gap by creating a process for family members and household members to work with law enforcement to temporarily remove guns and prevent the purchase of new guns by individuals who pose a heightened risk of harm to themselves or others.

In the schools, we work with law enforcement, administrators and mental health to identify at risk youth to eliminate their access to guns. We provide CALM training which provides counseling on access to lethal means. The problem in the schools is youth suicide. The problem focuses on:

1. Youth suicide
2. Means restriction
3. Conducting a family firearms assessment, and
4. Evaluate and provide a safety plan.

This bill allows family members and law enforcement to assist in the prevention process by allowing a vehicle to restrict access to firearms for at risk individuals. Between the ages of 14 to 24, suicide is the second leading cause of death in Oregon. Suicide, related violence and homicide are closely linked. Suicide remains one of the highest causes of mortality in the adolescent years and is very disturbing. I urge you to be in support of this bill. (SB 868)

ERPO is an especially important tool to help prevent gun suicides.

Recently, I had the pleasure to hear FD from columbine HS speak about lessons learned from Columbine. He said gun violence has to stop. We have to establish safe guards in our schools, community and at the State and National level to prevent easy access to firearms for the duration of a MH crisis. We have to educate everyone on the "Safe to Tell" when you know someone may be in crisis. In addition, as a healing community we need to help establish interventions for students/youth to feel a sense of belonging in their school programs and not outsiders.

Youth will find unhealthy connections (gangs) or potentially develop a plan to kill self by firearms and potentially others. K (youth from Salem) lost his best friend to gun violence and his plan was to shoot the killer in retaliation for the loss of his best friend. Luckily, law enforcement intervened and K is at St. Mary's for 18 months working on his anger management and getting out of the Gang family.

People experiencing a crisis may be at an elevated risk of suicide. Those in a suicidal crisis are much more likely to survive if they do not have easy access to firearms for the duration of the crisis. Research shows that people are more likely to die by suicide if they have easy access to firearms. In fact, 60 percent of all gun deaths are suicide and 85 percent of suicide attempts involving firearms are fatal.

Enacting ERPO would provide families and loved an opportunity to reduce the risk of suicide for a family member who is in crisis and provide safer circumstances in which to seek treatment or engage other resources to address the underlying causes of the dangerous behaviors. In Connecticut, which has a similar type of law, nearly one third of respondents received critical mental health and substance abuse treatment as a result of the intervention.

I would like to thank Senator Burdick and Senator Boquist for their leadership in introducing this important, bipartisan bill. I know that it will save lives and I urge the committee to pass this critical piece of legislation. Thank you.

This bill is based on the long-standing procedure of domestic violence protection orders here in Oregon, which involves both a court hearing and clearly defined due process protections.

To terminate the ERPO before its expiration, the respondent may file a written request. The respondent must provide evidence to a judge that he or she does not pose a significant danger. When the order is terminated or expired, and the respondent is not otherwise prohibited from purchasing or possessing a gun, firearms owned by the respondent may be returned.

Temporary/ex parte ERPO information, which is optional to include/may be too technical: Courts can also issue temporary or ex parte ERPOs. This will only be in effect for a short time period, typically three weeks. *confirm If the respondent does not own or possess firearms, he or she is temporarily prohibited from purchasing or otherwise acquiring a firearm. If the respondent does own firearms, he or she must surrender his or her guns for the duration of the order. Before the ex parte or temporary ERPO expires, the hearing will take place before a judge to address the claim of dangerousness.

Respondents are protected under ERPO.

This legislation builds in important legal protections for respondents. Under this bill, only family or household members of the respondent and law enforcement may petition for a GVPO. For an order to be issued, GVPO petitioners will be required to testify and present evidence in a court of law. Respondents will also have an opportunity to present evidence to show that he or she is not a danger to him or herself or others and a GVPO is not necessary. At any point during the order,

the respondent will have an opportunity to petition for termination of an order. Once the order expires or is terminated, the respondent may have their firearms returned.

I would like to thank Senator Burdick and Senator Boquist for their leadership in introducing this important, bipartisan bill. I know that it will save lives and I urge the committee to pass this critical piece of legislation. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Lisa Bates