



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® O F O R E G O N

The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 97-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

April 14, 2017

To: House Committee on Judiciary
Representative Jeff Barker, Chair

Re: HB 2526 – Firearm education materials – Support

The League of Women Voters of Oregon supports the suicide prevention educational program proposed in HB 2526, based on our gun safety and violence prevention positions. We believe this program would be an effective component of a coordinated effort to reduce the number of suicides in Oregon.

Oregon has the distinction of having one of the highest rates of suicide in the nation, and firearms play a significant role. Between 2010 and 2014, suicides accounted for 1,897 of the 2,280 Oregonians who died from firearms injuries. This roughly translates to one person committing suicide with a gun each day in Oregon. If we are serious about saving lives and reducing the number of suicides, we must consider a comprehensive public health approach, including the provision of additional mental health services, risk reduction strategies, and educational awareness programs, such as the one suggested in this bill.

Firearm safety and suicide prevention programs that provide educational materials to gun dealers have been successfully tested in other states. In 2016, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention collaborated on such a program with the National Shooting Sports Foundation, the firearms industry trade group. The program was tested in Alabama, Kentucky, Missouri, and New Mexico and is now being rolled out across the nation with the goal of stopping nearly 10,000 deaths in the next decade. The materials are designed to educate gun dealers on the risk factors and warning signs of suicide, as well as to provide firearm safety advice for family members of those in crisis. We urge Oregon to become part of this program and/or use existing materials as models to save the time and cost of development.

It is impossible to stop all suicides, but the goal should be to do what we can to reduce the number. This program is a laudable idea that is worth trying. The League strongly urges a “yes” vote on HB 2526.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

Norman Turrill
LWVOR President

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LWVOR Gun Safety Specialist