



PRESS RELEASE

SEN. AKASHA LAWRENCE SPENCE
REP. LISA REYNOLDS

For immediate release

February 21, 2022

CONTACT: Stephen Watson

Stephen.watson@oregonlegislature.gov

Portland Legislators Decry Recent Gun Violence, Demand Action

Sen. Lawrence Spence (D-Portland & Tigard) and Rep. Reynolds (D-Portland) issue joint statement

Salem, OR - On Saturday night, Portland residents gathered in Northeast Portland to protest police violence and were unconscionably gunned down. One person is dead, five are injured. There was also an officer-involved shooting in SW Portland, resulting in the killing of one person; details are sparse.

On Sunday night, there was another mass shooting in SE Portland that left one dead and three injured. The city of Portland has seen 127 shootings this year, including 16 gun homicides, and we're only in February. These shootings disproportionately impact those in our community who are BIPOC, disabled, suffering with mental illness, or houselessness, and, all too often, those who are at the intersection of all four.

"Protest is fundamental to a strong and engaged democracy. No one should fear that going to a gathering for a redress of grievances might end in gun violence and fatality," said Senator Akasha Lawrence Spence (D-Portland). "Our people dying at the hands of gun violence is as much a pandemic as the Coronavirus that many have now resigned to live with. Gun violence has long been endemic, but it doesn't have to be. It is our job as electeds to triage the roots of rampant gun violence in our communities, pass laws that prevent fatalities when interacting with police, and stop the spread of gun-based community violence."

The 2022 short legislative session includes bills that seek to do just that. SB 1510 would reduce traffic stops for minor infractions like a broken tail light, stops similar to the one that resulted in the murder of Daunte Wright by Officer Kim Potter in Minnesota. Other bills and budget requests seek to empower community-based organizations engaged in community-based violence prevention and intervention by providing them with grants to do this desperately needed work.

“Our hearts go out to those affected by these shootings,” said Representative Lisa Reynolds (D-Portland). “We are at a crucial time in our city and our state: we *must* devote resources to fund deep community work in violence prevention as one way to help communities move past the trauma of violence, of systemic racism as well as the inequities exacerbated by the COVID pandemic.”

Last year, the legislature passed SB 554, a safe gun storage law to prevent legally owned firearms from falling into the wrong hands (including those of children) by requiring them to be locked when not in use. The 2021 legislature also passed bills that provide funding for counties to create mobile crisis stabilization services, including peer respite centers, behavioral health urgent care walk-in centers, and an enhanced mental health hotline.

We are public servants who have been, and continue to be, dedicated to tackling both the upstream and downstream causes of gun violence in our communities.

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