

**[FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE]**

**DPO Gunowners' Caucus**  
**Testimony on House Bill 2510**

March 4, 2021

Chair Prusak, Vice Chairs Hayden and Salinas, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Michael Smith. I am a resident of Multnomah County and currently serve as Chair of the Gun Owners Caucus of the Democratic Party of Oregon. I write today on behalf of the Gun Owners Caucus to express our opposition to HB2510 as currently written.

On February 1st, the Caucus considered whether to support or oppose several bills before the State Legislature that pertain to firearms. Among these is HB 2510, colloquially known as the Safe Storage Bill. We appreciate that the bill represents a shift in attitude about gun legislation, treating gun violence as a public health issue. We believe this is a productive step in the right direction. We believe that a safe storage law would do a great deal to reduce gun deaths across the board -- mass shootings, yes, but also suicides and domestic homicides that make up the vast majority of gun deaths.

We believe that safe storage laws are a good idea in theory. As with any gun safety law, the details matter. The caucus has concerns with HB2510, and these mirror concerns that we had about HB 4005 from the 2020 Special Session. We ask that the Legislature consider modifying HB 2510 to address the below points before putting it to the floor.

Specifically, we note the following:

- **Strict liability.** The Caucus believes this could cast firearms ownership as so inherently dangerous as to warrant onerous regulations. We believe the fallout from this could be devastating to productive conversations on gun ownership and safety and to gun owners' rights.

- **No definition set for adequate safes and locking devices.** We discussed this at length during a telephone town hall held Thursday, January 30th, 2020, that included members of the Caucus, Representative Prusak, and Representative Sollman. The Representatives expressed their opinion that existing law and legislative intent would provide adequate guidelines to the Oregon Health Authority so that OHA would allow gun owners to employ a wide variety of effective, inexpensive devices in order to comply with the bill. We appreciated that

discussion, however the caucus remains concerned that OHA is being given too expansive authority to decide what constitutes an “adequate” locking or storage device. The Caucus is concerned that misplaced good intentions on the part of OHA regulators could have them decide that no cable lock or trigger lock meets their standard and that only the most robust (and expensive, and difficult to deploy) containers suffice, thus forcing renters and the poor to either carry all their firearms full time or risk a ticket and strict liability. They do not believe that current statements of legislative intent will suffice to prevent this. Simply put, the Caucus wants the bill to more extensively define the guidelines OHA is expected to follow.

- **Law Enforcement Officer exemption.** Per lines 40-42 of page [3] of the bill, civilians would be held to a minimum standard of firearm storage from which police are exempt. We believe that law enforcement should follow the same laws as Oregon citizens.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Smith, Chair, DPO Gun Owners’ Caucus