



Wednesday, February 17, 2021

Testimony in support of HB 2543

Representative Bynum and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Andy Harris, MD, and I am on the board of directors of Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility. I want to express our support for HB 2543.

A March 6, 2019 Quinnipiac Poll found that laws requiring background checks on all gun sales enjoy broad public approval nationally with 93% of voters supporting background checks for all gun sales. Under current federal law, gun purchases may move forward by default after three business days—even if a background check has not been completed.

Since its inception in 1994, national background checks have prevented over 3.5 million illegal gun sales to people with felony convictions, history of domestic violence abuse, serious mental illness, or fugitives from justice.¹

The unfortunate reality is that not all background checks can be processed in three days, and this restriction permits sales to unqualified persons. Such was the case when white supremacist Dylann Roof obtained a gun to shoot Black clergy and congregants in a Charleston church in 2015, otherwise known as the “Charleston Loophole.” The reality is that background checks that take longer than three business days are four times as likely to be denied.

Compounding the problem, gun sales during the COVID-19 pandemic have put an unparalleled strain on the system, with 43 percent more background checks being processed across the country between March and November 2020, compared to the same period in 2019.

Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility sees gun violence as a serious public health issue in Oregon. Shootings in Portland more than doubled in 2020 to over 900, compared to 393 shootings in all of 2019.

HB 2543 prohibits the transfer of firearms by a gun dealer or private party if Oregon State Police is unable to determine whether the intended buyer is qualified to possess a firearm within three days. By passing HB 2543 the 2021 Oregon Legislature can help to keep guns out of the hands of unqualified buyers.

19 states and D.C. have laws that give authorities more than three business days to complete a background check. It is time that Oregon moved to reduce gun violence by closing the Charleston Loophole. For the sake of public health, Oregon PSR urges you to pass HB 2543.

Thank you for your time and concern on this important issue.

Andy Harris, MD
Board of Directors
Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility

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¹ Gun Safety website from FBI data and Karberg et al., *Background Checks for Firearm*
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