

[FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE]

DPO Gun Owners' Caucus
Testimony on HB 2543

Chair Bynum, Vice Chairs Noble and Power, 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 HB2543 as written.

On February 8th, the Caucus considered whether to support or oppose several bills before the State Legislature that pertain to firearms. Among these bills was House Bill 2543, a bill forbidding the transfer of a firearm unless the transferor receives a unique background check approval number from the Department of State Police, and removing an allowance that the transfer may still occur if the Department of State Police does not issue that number by the end of the transferor's business day subsequent to the day the background check was initiated.

We believe removing the allowance opens the door to a *de facto* ban on firearms purchases. You are no doubt already aware that the Department of State Police faces a backlog on firearm transfers. I and other members have heard anecdotes of approvals taking three weeks or longer. No doubt this is due to existing systems issues and to COVID. We understand that there is a compelling need for firearms transactions to be subject to a background check. Nonetheless, there is also a Second Amendment right for a legitimate firearms purchase to go through in a speedy and orderly fashion. What this bill will do is write into law that the Department of State Police does not need to bring their systems and procedures up to speed. In fact, our reading is that this bill would allow for the Department of State Police to simply shut down firearms transfers whenever it wants. This is not acceptable.

We recommend that the legislature either scrap this bill, or replace it with one that allows the transfer to take place after a longer period of time. We recommend ten days as a reasonable amount of time.

With all that said, the real solution to the problem of the Department of State Police facing a backlog is for the legislature to give DSP a directive to speed up background checks, and to allocate funding and positions toward that effort. We will be happy to work with the legislature towards that end.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Smith
Chair, Gun Owners Caucus, Democratic Party of Oregon