

[FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE]

DPO Gun Owners' Caucus
Testimony on SB 554

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, 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 SB 554, and to suggest a more sensible alternative.

On February 1st, the Caucus considered whether to support or oppose several bills before the State Legislature that pertain to firearms. Among these bills was Senate Bill 554, a bill allowing a city, county, metropolitan service district, port operating commercial airport, school district, college or university to adopt ordinance or policy limiting or precluding affirmative defense for possession of firearms in public buildings by concealed handgun licensees. This bill also increases the maximum cost of a Concealed Handgun License to \$100 (\$75 for renewal).

After a careful consideration of the language of SB 554, we believe that this bill would lead to a *de facto* ban on concealed carry. The first provision will lead to a maze of "no-carry-zones" that become impossible to navigate even with posted notifications. For example, we note that universities often control more land than just the campus grounds, the parking structures of airports are not exempt from bans (meaning that one would have to leave one's firearm at home when picking up a friend at the airport), and so on. As for the second provision, we believe that it is wholly unnecessary and will only lead to the poor being further discouraged from concealed carry.

We understand that there is urgency behind SB 554 because of the attempted insurgency of December 21, 2020. We agree that, in light of those events, the State Legislature has a compelling interest in banning concealed and open carry on Capitol grounds. We believe that SB as written is the wrong way to go about doing this. We strongly suggest instead a ban on possession of a firearm or other weapon in the Capitol building and the nearby Capitol parks in fashion similar to ORS 166.370 (2). This more limited measure will criminalize the practice of carrying, openly or concealed, a firearm inside or on the steps of the Capitol. We believe that this more limited measure is justified whereas the broader bill is not.

Respectfully submitted,

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