

My name is Ashley Planalp. I am from Albany Oregon and I am a registered ICU nurse. I have been an advocate for gun violence prevention since 2012 following the massacre at Sandyhook. Through my years of advocacy on this issue, I have had the unfortunate privilege to meet many gun violence survivors. In 2015, I escorted Reverend Sharon Risher to a committee hearing in Salem to testify in favor of closing the Charleston Loop Hole. Her mother was one of nine victims who was shot by a white supremacist in the sanctuary of her own church. The perpetrator of the shooting was allowed to purchase his gun through a loophole in South Carolina's state gun laws that allows a gun sale to proceed if a background check takes longer than three business days. Many people are surprised to know that that same loophole exists in Oregon. For 5 years, fellow advocates and I have been working to close this dangerous gap in our state's gun laws.

This issue cannot be ignored any longer. In 2020 it is estimated that at least 585,000 background checks took longer than 3 business days nationwide. Here in Oregon, there were 100,000 more instant firearm background checks processed through the state's Firearms Instant Check System in 2020 when compared to the previous year. During this year, there were 2,538 denials and 89% of those denials were because the purchaser was a felon or another prohibited person. The increased number of background checks processed this year accounts for a 46% rise statewide over the previous year.

At this time, it is not known if the drastic decrease in denial investigations reflects an increase in the number of prohibited firearm purchasers who illegally purchased firearms through the Charleston Loophole.

We do know, however, that 98 Oregonians were fatally shot (excluding suicides) between March 1, 2019 and February 29, 2020 and 133 were fatally shot between March 1, 2020 and February 28, 2021 (Gun Violence Archive).

To state that more clearly: homicide shootings have risen in Oregon by 36% compared to the year immediately preceding the COVID-19 pandemic and the coincident surge in firearm sales (March 1, 2019 through February 29, 2020 compared to March 1, 2020 through February 28, 2021).

Oregon has been plunged into a tidal wave of gun sales. Homicide shootings are already on the rise. Closing the Charleston Loophole is one way to enforce existing laws and stop prohibited purchasers from possessing firearms.

Background checks exist for a reason. They are a part of my life as a nurse and volunteer. In order to care for patients, I have to be properly vetted and pass a background check. In order to volunteer at my daughters' schools, I have to be properly vetted and pass a background check. To even be allowed to step foot on the premises to pick up my daughters from Girl Scouts at the Girl Scout hut I have to be properly vetted and pass a background check. No responsible person would advocate for me to be able to work with children or with patients if I had an incomplete background check. Why? Because it is not safe.

That is why I encourage you to pass HB 2543 which requires firearm background checks to be completed and approved before the sale or transfer of a firearm can take place. HB 2543 will require gun sellers to respect existing laws, including longstanding laws prohibiting felons, abusers, fugitives from justice, and other prohibited purchasers from buying guns. There is no logical reason to continue to allow this loophole to exist. Passing HB 2543 is a common-sense measure that will save lives.