

March 22, 2025

HB 3076 to the House Committee On Judiciary

Dear Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Chotzen and Wallen, and Honored Members of the Committee:

My name is Steve Schneider, and I live in Eugene. I am submitting this testimony as a private citizen.

First, like many of my fellow Oregonians who *are* responsible and experienced firearms owners, and who also want to see the positive aspects of hunting and shooting sports thrive, and maintain the right to self defense, I had my skepticisms when I first heard about this bill. Having friends who are FFLs and knowing the role that gun shops play in towns like where I grew up, I know about the procedures and regulations already required to abide by. The last thing anyone wants is more paperwork, fees, and hassle.

However, when learning more about the *reasoning* behind the bill and the issues it is attempting to address, it's clear that there needs to be a serious conversation about how to do so. I don't believe the fundamental point here is to punish FFLs or simply restrict access to firearms through some malicious political or ideological intent (many of the lawmakers supporting this bill are gun owners themselves), but to find a way to hold accountable those dealers who do not meet the high standards that most FFLs do, such as those dealers who enable or allow straw purchasing, trafficking, or theft through negligence or ill intent.

Why? Because there are simply too many crime guns in Oregon.

Most importantly, and something we can all agree on: There are way too many people- our fellow citizens, Oregonians, humans- dying from preventable gun tragedies.

Those closest to the issue of gun tragedies, including those professionally and personally involved in the issue— **law enforcement, civic leaders, doctors, nurses, paramedics, social workers, crisis intervention specialists, and teachers**— all agree that much, much more needs to be done to reduce firearm injuries and deaths. These are the people we generally look up to in society and respect for their experience and expertise in these areas. They are the ones dealing with the hardest aspects of gun tragedies. Let's hear what they have to say.

While trends of violent crime nationally do seem to be abating overall, for each person it does occur to, their life is forever changed. One preventable gun tragedy is too much. Efforts to reduce gun violence must include supporting and resourcing law enforcement and ensuring our justice system is effectively holding accountable those who victimize others. Reducing crime is a huge part of the solution, and that includes ensuring our youth are well aware of the realities of firearm tragedies and being proactive in gun safety and secure storage education.

Yet, the truth is that too many people who should NOT be easily accessing guns— like those that we *already* agree should not have them, such as underage folks or violent offenders — *are*

possessing and concealing them. And with thousands of first-time firearm owners purchasing them, often without much training or knowledge, this does lead to many instances where fundamental gun safety practices are ignored, such as secure storage and safe handling, and terrible, preventable gun tragedies occur.

From an economic perspective alone, the impacts of gun violence and firearm suicide costs Oregon billions of dollars annually. From a health perspective, we know that preventative efforts save money and resources overall by lowering the need for expensive interventions and treatments later on. This is true for many issues our society faces.

Most folks in Oregon support law enforcement and want them to be able to do their jobs effectively— so yes, *of course* we need to enforce laws already in place to prevent straw purchasing and trafficking. And yes, there is already a system to license and regulate gun dealers. However, when the ATF says that they are historically and habitually under-resourced to do that task, and that the system overall is not working, then we have a problem that needs to be solved by mature, engaged citizens who are willing to think beyond their personal circumstances and open their minds to what is possible. It takes a service mentality.

So, in this case, what can be done? Many things— *including perhaps a state gun dealer license*. But it must be done right!

Multiple things on the same topic are true at the same time, and looking at other states with similar gun dealer licensing, we see some things worth considering:

1. It is possible to simultaneously exercise 2nd Amendment rights while adapting to current realities that demand new solutions. There *are* historical precedents in regulating the commerce of firearms in the U.S. while still allowing us to exercise our right to *bear* arms. In this case, the painful burden of gun tragedies for many people in Oregon is imploring them to try anything to prevent it from happening again. They have looked for ideas from other U.S. states (16 of them), and according to the data associated with state gun dealer licensing, the reduction in homicides and other gun-related crimes does provide a very strong case for this kind of approach. These folks need to work with FFLs to find what would be most effective to reach the intended outcome.
2. At the same time, the current system to license and regulate gun dealers by the ATF is something that many FFLs feel is working (in lots of ways, it generally is) and is something that many are serious and strict about. They feel like they 1) have not been consulted on this topic, 2) that they are most often part of the solution to preventing criminals from acquiring firearms, and that 3) this puts an undue burden on them, especially small businesses. These concerns need to be taken into account, and we need gun dealers to articulate their ideas for how to hold accountable those FFLs who *are* bad actors. This is their industry, so they need to help law enforcement and our lawmakers figure out how to get rid of the dealers who contribute to crime.

Furthermore, as a former business co-founder and general manager, there does need to be a big conversation about best business practices and a code of ethics among gun dealers. The role that they can, and often do, play in educating people about suicide prevention, gun safety fundamentals, hunting regulations and ethics, community fundraising, etc. is an important one in many Oregon communities. Like any business owner, they want to thrive. However, there do need to be fundamental security measures in place simply as a standard best business practice.

For example, the company I managed had an inventory of less value and potential lethality than what gun dealers provide, yet I still took all precautions by installing a security system, locks, and other measures. It was a wise investment. In this day and age, there are quality and affordable options to do so. In fact, these measures protected my warehouse from an attempted break-in and the footage was valuable for law enforcement.

'Security' and a 'Training Mindset' are concepts well understood in the firearm community, so this seems like a perfect chance for FFLs of all types to feel *empowered* and *motivated* to be part of this much needed effort to reduce the gaps in enforcement against those dealers who aren't doing the right thing. If you are a protector, you know the importance of preventative security measures— those listed in the bill are basic and make sense from this point of view.

I have heard concerns from FFLs about the licensing fees, the fears of privacy concerns, a lack of clarification about different types of FFLs and exemptions for certain types and business sizes, and the cost of security upgrades. These are all valuable and must be thoroughly considered. Ultimately, this bill needs to be able to achieve its goal, which is reducing straw purchases, trafficking, theft, and overall reducing the number of crime guns in our communities.

At the end of the day, the fact that gun violence is a leading cause of death among our children and youth is a sad reality that, as a combat Veteran and former medic with firsthand experience treating gunshot wounds, I find distressing and frankly unacceptable *and* embarrassing as an American. It is an unacceptable thing that, no matter whether you have experience with gun tragedies or not, we should all be working overtime to change.

It is taking multiple solutions to end gun tragedies, and the effort must be led by those closest to the issues, including survivors of tragedy, gun owners and non-gun owners alike, doctors and nurses, and yes- gun dealers especially.

I believe in the intention behind this bill- to reduce tragedies through an evidence-based approach- but have concern on behalf of the FFLs who feel left out of the process. This is an and/also approach to a complex problem, so let's work together and let's make sure this bill is done the right way!

Thank you,
Steve Schneider