

TO: Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee
Oregon Senate Committee on the Judiciary

FROM: Tim Carey, JD
Law and Policy Advisor, Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions

DATE: March 27, 2025

RE: SB243 Requires the Department of State Police to study the efficiency of firearm transfer criminal background checks

My name is Tim Carey, and I am a Law and Policy Advisor at the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions. My testimony is offered in my individual capacity as an expert in gun violence prevention and does not represent the views of Johns Hopkins University. Given the efficacy of waiting periods in reducing firearm suicide and violent crime, I support the favorable passage of Senate Bill 243 as amended.

Acts of violence are often impulsive. Research shows that many suicide attempts occur with little to no planning, almost half with less than 10 minutes separating ideation and action.^{i, ii, iii} In the time it takes to sort your laundry, almost a million Americans experienced a suicide attempt. What often separates an attempt from a death is the means used by the person in crisis.

Research also shows that guns are more lethal than other suicide means – 90% of suicide attempts involving firearms are fatal and firearms account for more than half of all suicide deaths even though they make up less than 10% of all suicide attempts.^{iv} In 2023, 489 Oregonians committed suicide by firearm, making up over half of all suicides in the state.^v Individuals who attempt suicide by other methods have time to re-evaluate, to stop, to seek help, or to have someone come to their aid.

The lethality of firearms is critical to this calculus. Nine out of ten people who attempt suicide and survive will not go on to die by suicide at a later date. Firearms are too deadly to allow them that chance.^{vi}

Waiting periods put time and space between a person who may hurt themselves or someone else and a firearm. An analysis of state-level mandatory waiting periods from 1970 to 2014 found waiting periods are associated with a 17% reduction in gun homicides and a 7—11% reduction in firearm suicides.^{vii}

Oregon would not be the first to pass this life-saving policy. Thirteen states and the District of Columbia have waiting periods that apply to the purchase of firearms, with some exceptions.^{viii} It's time for Oregon to join them.

Putting time and space between lethal means and impulsive thoughts saves lives. Waiting periods are a proven method to reduce firearm suicide just by... waiting. As an expert in gun violence and the means to address it, I urge you to not delay in voting in favor of SB 243.

Sincere Regards,

Tim Carey

ⁱ Hawton, K. (2007). Restricting access to methods of suicide. *Crisis*, 28(S1), 4–9. <https://doi.org/10.1027/0227-5910.28.s1.4>.

ⁱⁱ Simon, O. R., Swann, A. C., Powell, K. E., Potter, L. B., Kresnow, M. J., & O'Carroll, P. W. (2001). Characteristics of impulsive suicide attempts and attempters. *Suicide & life-threatening behavior*, 32(1 Suppl), 49–59. <https://doi.org/10.1521/suli.32.1.5.49.24212>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Deisenhammer EA, Ing CM, Strauss R, et al. The duration of the suicidal process: how much time is left for intervention between consideration and accomplishment of a suicide attempt? *J Clin Psychiatry*. 2009;70(1):19-24.

^{iv} Conner, A., Azrael, D., & Miller, M. (2019). Suicide case-fatality rates in the United States, 2007 to 2014. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 171(12), 885–895. <https://doi.org/10.7326/m19-1324>.

^v Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. Underlying Cause of Death. Age-adjusted Gun Deaths and Rates per 100,000. WONDER Online Database, 1999-2023; & WISQARS. National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) and Cost of Injury Modules. 2022.

^{vi} Owens, D., Horrocks, J., & House, A. (2002). Fatal and non-fatal repetition of self-harm. Systematic review. *The British journal of psychiatry : the journal of mental science*, 181, 193–199. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.181.3.193>.

^{vii} Luca, M., Malhotra, D., & Poliquin, C. (2017). Handgun waiting periods reduce gun deaths. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 114(46), 12162–12165. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1619896114>.

^{viii} Cal. Penal Code § 26815; C.R.S. § 18-12-115; Fla. Stat. § 790.0655; Haw. Rev. Stat. § 134-2; 720 Ill. Comp. Stat. § 5/24-3; 25 MRSA §2015; Md. Code Ann., Pub. Safety Law §§ 5-123(a), 5-124(a); Minn. Stat. § 624.7132; N.J. Stat. Ann. § 2C:58-2; N.M. Stat. Ann. § 30-7-7.3; 11 R.I. Gen. Laws §§ 11-47-35(a)(1), 11-47-35.2(a); 13 VSA § 4019a; Wash. Rev. Code § 9.41.092(2).