

I am submitting this testimony in strong opposition to Senate Bill 243, a measure that directs the Department of State Police to conduct a study on the efficiency of criminal background checks for firearm transfers. This bill is misguided, unnecessary, and risks undermining more pressing priorities. I urge the Legislative Assembly to reject this proposal and focus on practical, evidence-based solutions that respect individual rights.

First, the current system for firearm transfer background checks in Oregon is already functional and effective. The Oregon State Police, in coordination with federal systems like the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), process these checks promptly in most cases. Delays, when they occur, are often due to incomplete records or federal-level bottlenecks—issues beyond the scope of this proposed study. Senate Bill 243 provides no concrete evidence that the existing process is broadly inefficient or that a study would yield actionable improvements. Without a clear problem statement backed by data, this legislation feels like a solution in search of a problem, wasting time and resources that could be better allocated elsewhere.

Second, tasking the Department of State Police with this study places an undue burden on an agency already stretched thin. The department is responsible for enforcing laws, responding to emergencies, and maintaining order across the state. Requiring them to divert personnel, funding, and expertise to a vague study—due by September 15, 2026—detracts from their core mission. Oregon has seen rising concerns about illegal firearm trafficking and violent crime in certain areas. Why not direct resources toward strengthening enforcement efforts, which could better address these issues? Senate Bill 243 risks diluting focus on these priorities for the sake of a report that may ultimately sit on a shelf, especially given its repeal date of January 2, 2027.

Third, the bill's temporary nature raises questions about its true purpose and effectiveness. If the study's findings are meant to inform legislation, why include a sunset clause so soon after the report's submission? This timeline suggests a lack of commitment to meaningful follow-through. Legislative changes based on the report would require additional sessions, debates, and resources—potentially after the study's legal mandate has expired. This structure undermines confidence that the effort will lead to tangible outcomes, making it appear more performative than substantive. Oregonians deserve policies with clear goals and lasting impact, not short-term studies with ambiguous intent.

Furthermore, I am concerned about the potential implications of this bill for law-abiding gun owners. While the digest claims neutrality, the focus on 'efficiency' could open the door to recommendations that erode Second Amendment rights under the guise of streamlining. The government isn't tasked with ensuring my safety—that's my responsibility, as affirmed by the Second Amendment. I value my constitutional protections, and the lack of specificity in the bill's language leaves too much room for interpretation, which could be exploited by future agendas unrelated to the stated purpose. This uncertainty is unacceptable.

Finally, the Flesch Readability Score of 67.5 cited in the summary indicates the bill's description is accessible, yet its actual impact remains opaque to the public. Most Oregonians won't see the practical need for this study, nor will they benefit directly from its findings. Instead of funding an academic exercise, the Legislative Assembly should prioritize transparency by engaging communities—gun owners, law enforcement, and others—to identify real challenges and craft targeted solutions. Senate Bill 243 sidesteps this collaborative approach in favor of a top-down directive that risks being ignored or forgotten by its own expiration date.

In conclusion, Senate Bill 243 is an ill-conceived measure that lacks justification, strains state resources, and offers little promise of meaningful results. I respectfully urge the interim committees of the Legislative Assembly related to the judiciary to reject this bill and redirect attention to policies that respect individual rights without redundancy or overreach. Oregon deserves better than a temporary study with no clear vision—let's invest in action, not paperwork. Thank you for considering my testimony