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On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB243

Chair Prozanski, vice-chair Thatcher, and members of the committee,

As a Democrat who - like many of our fellow Oregonians - owns firearms, I have serious concerns with this bill. And like most of us, I have a strong desire to see real gun violence reduction in our state. However, bills such as SB 243 are not the way forward.

I am alarmed at the addition of an ability for local governments to bar CHL holders from not only public buildings but even "adjacent grounds" of those buildings and those of existing prohibited areas. This could cause a person who simply walks by their own city hall with no intention of entering to be charged with a crime; the same would hold true for someone who picks up a friend outside PDX airport. We cannot require citizens who wish to enter our public spaces to abandon their Second Amendment rights. Our CHL holders have repeatedly proven to be law-abiding (committing crimes at a substantially lower rate than the general population) and there is no reason to believe that imposing these restrictions would have any positive impact on our safety (in fact, many would argue that the effect could be quite the opposite).

Though well-intentioned, firearms purchase waiting periods have been shown to have at best a minimal effect on crime in states where they have been enacted and therefore amount to little more than a nuisance for the law-abiding (who may already have to wait several days while background checks are completed) while causing no hindrance to those who obtain their firearms thru illicit means.

Barring 18- to 20-year-olds from buying firearms is very likely unconstitutional, and indeed a similar law was recently struck down as such in court. At a time when we are facing budgetary constraints, it would not be prudent to spend taxpayer dollars defending against a lawsuit that the state would most certainly lose.

Having stated these issues, I would like to draw the committee's attention to some solutions to violence which have proven effective elsewhere and can have the same power here as well.

First and foremost in the immediate term, we should invest in community based violence prevention programs, which have been enacted in studied in cities across the country including New York, NY and Philadelphia, PA. These programs have consistently shown tangible positive effects in reducing violence because they involve

grassroots interventions by trusted neighborhood residents who build rapport with those most likely to be involved in shootings. In the East New York neighborhood alone, the John Jay College of Criminal Justice found that the organization Cure Violence reduced shooting injuries by 50%.

Secondly, it is worth noting that in Oregon, over three quarters of gun deaths are suicides. For this reason, it is essential that we continue to fund accessible mental health programs and that we take meaningful steps to prevent the despair that leads too many to make that tragic choice. Economic development and increased availability of social services - especially in our rural areas where the suicide rate is higher - to build prosperity and provide support for struggling communities across the state will help in bringing down these numbers.

Given the times in which we live where hate crimes have surged (especially in Oregon, where we have seen a major uptick in antisemitism, racism and transphobia), Second Amendment guarantees are also protections for our most vulnerable Oregonians. Groups such as the Pink Pistols (an LGBTQ rights organization promoting responsible self-defense) and Redneck Revolt (a progressive organization dedicated to helping protect against attacks by racist and fascist gangs) can attest to this. We cannot allow harm to come to our marginalized community members, many of whom feel the police cannot or will not protect them.

I now ask that you pull your support of SB 243 and instead focus on uplifting the working-class, BIPOC and LGBTQ folks who need it the most.