



April 1, 2025

Senator Floyd Prozanski, Chair
Senate Judiciary Committee
900 Court St. NE,
Salem Oregon 97301

RE: Senate Bill 697 *Prohibits a person under 21 years of age from possessing firearms with specified exceptions.*

Position: **OPPOSE**

Dear Chair Prozanski and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

On behalf of Delta Waterfowl members both in the state of Oregon and across the country, I am writing to you today to encourage you to **OPPOSE Senate Bill 697** – legislation that would unfairly prohibit a person under the age of 21 from possessing a firearm.

For some background, Delta Waterfowl is a leading conservation group founded at the famed Delta Marsh in Manitoba, with its United States Headquarters in Bismarck, North Dakota. We work to produce ducks through intensive management programs and conservation of breeding duck habitats. Delta conducts vital waterfowl research and promotes and protects the continuing tradition of waterfowl hunting in North America.

Delta Waterfowl's main concern about this bill is how it will affect the hunting community. SB 697 does have language suggesting that it will not affect our community, but unfortunately, that is false. The caveat in the bill is that any individual under the age of 21 can possess a firearm to hunt if they are with a parent or guardian. The issue with this language is that no one between the ages of 18 and 20 can hunt by themselves. I can attest to the problem with this on a personal level. I grew up in California and attended the University of Oregon, where I frequently hunted ducks throughout Lane County. If this legislation had been on the books while I was attending college, I would not have been able to participate in hunting because my parents did not live in Oregon. This bill is unfair to hunters that exist in this age bracket and would clearly limit their ability to hunt at their leisure.

Additionally, this bill will directly impede our organization's ability to run University Hunt Programs at colleges and universities within the state. Delta's focus on waterfowl hunters as the base of wetland and waterfowl conservation has made us aware that most wildlife management students, the future leaders of waterfowl management, have had little or no exposure to hunting, nor a first-hand experience of the role of hunting in North American wildlife management. Not surprisingly, this has led to a generation of employed professionals who lack an understanding of the ecological, economic, recreational, and moral virtues of hunting. As a direct result of these concerns, Delta launched our

University Hunting Program in August 2017, where we take students into the field for their first duck hunt. If this bill were to pass, we would no longer be able to run this program in Oregon because our students would not be allowed to possess firearms, even with our mentors present.

Another potential side effect of this bill is a loss in youth hunting. According to the [2022 USFW Fishing and Hunting Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation in the U.S.](#) study, “Thirty percent of first-time anglers were 10 years old or younger compared to 21 percent of first-time hunters. However, the cumulative percent of individuals hunting for the first time increases rapidly through the teenage years, so roughly half of both first-time hunters and anglers are 20 years of age or younger: 52 percent of hunters and 49 percent of anglers, respectively. This finding underscores the importance of recruitment during the adolescent years.” Youth hunter retention is already a major problem across North America, with most hunters being above the age of 40 versus below it. This bill will only further exasperate this issue by discouraging young people from firearm ownership, which will ultimately discourage them from hunting.

This bill would have longstanding negative effects for Oregon hunters, and that is why we respectfully ask that you **OPPOSE** the bill. We look forward to working with this committee and the rest of the Senate as it works its way through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'CH' with a horizontal line through it.

Christopher L. Hoon
Manager of Government Affairs – Pacific Flyway
Delta Waterfowl Foundation