

Submitter: Heather Gillespie King  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Rules  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB243

Honorable Members of the Oregon Legislature,

My name is Heather Gillespie-King, a law-abiding Oregonian and licensed concealed handgun carrier. I am submitting this written testimony to oppose Senate Bill 243, specifically its provision allowing local governments to prohibit concealed carry in public buildings, such as libraries, for concealed handgun license (CHL) holders. This restriction threatens the right that saved my life, and I urge you to preserve this critical protection for Oregonians.

On a hot summer day in Bend, I visited a public library to borrow a book, planning to read by the river. Dressed in a swimsuit top and carrying a backpack with my book, blanket, and water, I felt safe leaving a place meant for community. But as I walked, an SUV circled me four times, raising my alarm. When it angled to block my path, a large man leapt from the passenger seat and charged toward me.

The terror I felt was overwhelming—I was certain I faced abduction, possibly into human trafficking. As a woman alone, I had seconds to act. Because I legally carried my concealed firearm, valid in that library, I drew my weapon and prepared to defend myself. When the men saw it, the one charging me retreated, jumped back into the SUV, and they drove off, watching me as I reached a group of people by the river for safety. I'm trained to use my firearm but pray I never have to. That day, my CHL saved my life.

I reported the incident to the Bend Police Department, but no officers followed up or visited, even after I found safety with others. This lack of response proves that when danger strikes, we must rely on ourselves. SB 243's provision would have disarmed me in that library, leaving me defenseless on that walk. Public buildings aren't immune to threats—my encounter happened steps from one. Predators ignore "gun-free zones," but they fear armed citizens, as I showed.

Oregon's CHL holders are vetted, trained, and responsible. Restricting our carry in public buildings creates vulnerabilities criminals exploit. I urge you to oppose SB 243's concealed carry restrictions. My firearm is my equalizer, protecting me when help is too far away. Denying this right in places Oregonians gather doesn't enhance safety—it endangers us. Thank you for considering my story and for your service.

Sincerely,

Heather Gillespie-King  
Oregon