



**Testimony Before the  
Senate Judiciary regarding SB 700 -14  
Presented by Dr. Leigh Dolin  
on behalf of the Oregon Medical Association  
April 5, 2013**

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Close, members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Dr. Leigh Dolin and I am a member of the Legislative Committee as well as a past president of the Oregon Medical Association. I am a retired internist who practiced in Portland as well as a former major and commander of a TAC Hospital in the U.S. Air Force.

The OMA supports SB 700-14 as an initiative that strengthens existing gun laws by requiring background checks for all gun sales and transfers, with the exception of sales to immediate family members. The OMA recognizes that gun safety is a major factor in morbidity and mortality and believes that requiring background checks on all guns sales and transfers is a preventative measure that works. From 1994 to 2008, according to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), background checks have prevented 1.8 million prohibited people in the United States, including felons and the mentally ill, from buying guns.

SB 700-14 strengthens Oregon's existing law by requiring that gun sales between private parties be preceded by a background check. Current law only requires purchasers of guns sold by licensed dealers or sellers at gun shows to be subject to a background check. This expanded background check will help keep guns out of the hands of criminals, people who are mentally ill and others who should not have guns. Background checks do not prevent law abiding citizens from buying or owning guns.

A recently published study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* on the correlation between firearm legislation and firearm-related fatalities found that states with background checks on private sales had 16 percent lower firearm fatality rates<sup>1</sup>. In Oregon, from 2007 – 2010, 1,625 citizens died from firearm-related deaths; as many as 260 lives may have been spared if Oregon had universal background checks in that same time period.

As a physician and former major in the military, I understand the importance of gun safety for my patients and support preventative measures that ensure guns are obtained and stored appropriately in the home. Universal background checks are a step in the right direction; background checks are a deterrent to those who shouldn't buy guns, thereby increasing the safety of my patients.

The OMA urges your support of SB 700-14. I would like to thank you once again for the opportunity to address the committee regarding this very important topic and I'm happy to answer any questions.

**The Oregon Medical Association is an organization of over 7,800 physicians, physician assistants, and medical students organized to serve and support physicians in their efforts to improve the health of Oregonians. Additional information can be found at [www.theOMA.org](http://www.theOMA.org).**

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<sup>1</sup> Fleegler et. al (2013). "Firearm Legislation and Firearm-Related Fatalities in the United States," *Journal of American Medical Association*.