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Chair Prozanski and members of the committee,

My name is Dr. Jim Scott. I'm an Oregon native. I've been a physician in this state for 40 years. I've seen the tragic effects of gun violence first hand – for a number of years, I served as the medical examiner in Florence, on the coast. Most often I was called on to examine those who died a natural death at home. But too often, suicide by gun was the cause. Tragically, on a couple of occasions, the deceased was a young person. Any parent knows that young people are impulsive. If someone takes pills or cuts themselves, we can usually save them. Not so with guns. And, we know that most that attempt suicide don't repeat.

I care deeply about the health of our communities and believe we must employ sound public policy to protect the public health. Gun violence has reached epidemic proportions in our state and nation and should be understood and treated as a public health crisis.

A public health approach has been successful in reducing death and disability from infectious diseases, automobile accidents, unsafe food, and consumer products. But similar strategies have not been put in effect to address injuries and fatalities from firearms. We see the tragic result of these policy failures in our work. Here in Oregon, there are more fatalities a year from firearms than from motor vehicle traffic accidents or unintentional poisoning.

Closing the loopholes in our background checks system is one policy prescription that we can take to help reduce gun violence in our state. Evidence shows that when background checks are required, they are effective at keeping guns out of the hands of prohibited persons. Since the federal background check requirement was adopted in 1994, over two million prohibited persons have been denied a firearm transfer or permit. Closing the private sale loophole in Oregon state law is a simple way we can crack down on criminals' easy access to firearms.

The people of Oregon have responded. 87 percent say they support expanding background checks on gun purchases. It's common sense, but the evidence makes the case for background checks as well. Residents of the 14 states that have expanded background checks beyond the federal standard are safer. Compared to the rest of the country here are the stats:

- Gun trafficking in these states is 48 percent lower.
- The rate at which women are killed with a gun by an intimate partner is 46 percent lower.
- And the gun suicide rate is 48 percent lower.

Now this law, like any other law, will not be perfect. Law enforcement will not be able to police every single transaction. Some criminals will still get guns. There will still be gun violence.

But this law will allow responsible gun owners to make sure their guns don't end up in the hands of criminals. It will give law enforcement a critical tool to fight gun trafficking and gun violence. It will make it more difficult for criminals to get guns. And, most importantly, it will save lives. Maybe the life of someone you know. All without infringing on the Second Amendment rights of law abiding Oregonians.

It is time for the Legislature to take action to confront the epidemic of gun violence in our communities. I hope you will support SB 941.