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HB 5031 Testimony.

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Executive Director.

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I doubt anyone thinks we have too many Troopers in Oregon.

As you know we don't have many and now they are being asked to do more than ever because some of our sheriffs cannot afford full time patrols. And at any given time, a significant number of them are here, protecting us.

For the last few years the State Troopers have also been tasked with investigating every gun purchase denial, a process that unfortunately is often a wild goose chase that used to take hours out of a troopers day and now is often months behind.

As you probably know, while there are approximately 200 denials reported every month, the average number of arrests for attempted illegal purchases of a firearm is just slightly above zero.

I have had the good fortune to become friends with many troopers both active and retired. I am still friendly, and in touch with one who I met when he wrote me a ticket in front of this building ten years ago.

I have had the opportunity to get to know Capt. Fugate who has been very gracious and helpful when I have reached out to him with questions.

Unfortunately in my professional capacity, the OSP unit I deal with most is the firearms background check unit. Recently those experiences have been less than positive.

In years past, under different leadership, when I had questions or concerns about policies in place for the instant check unit, the director was very responsive. I met with several members of the unit years ago because of the daily complaints I was getting about failed background checks.

At that meeting I was able to point out several errors in their policies and information they were giving the public, and corrections were quickly made. The number of complaints I was getting dropped off precipitously.

But now it is a rare day when I don't get a call or email asking for help dealing with an unjustified delay or denial. It's gotten so bad that I have had to change the outgoing message on our voicemail suggesting if you are calling about a delay or denial to visit our website first.

The FICs unit seems to default to "no." The wait times for approvals are erratic at best and there are times when no background checks are conducted at all because their systems are down . And things have not improved since they implemented online checks that do not involve a dealer spending hours on hold on the phone.

At my club, which has a federal firearms license, we have had members approved immediately for firearms transfers while still be delayed for guns they tried to buy months before. And this is not isolated or rare.

When I have tried to contact members of the unit to get information for people who called me with questions they could not get answered, there is no response.

People frequently wait months to get approvals, and attempting to get help on resolving a delay or denial requires mostly luck. Trish Whitfield, at a meeting set up by Paul Evans last year, said they have no dedicated personal to help people who are calling to resolve mistaken delays and denials.

If a person is delayed or denied without justification, it becomes their problem and full time job to fix it, and it's nearly impossible to get anyone at FICS to answer the phone.

Jennifer Williamson has testified that 95% of background check delays are unjustified, but the people whose rights, and sometimes safety, are put on hold have virtually no recourse.... Unless they live in a district with a sympathetic legislator.

Time after time when I have suggested to people who have been delayed that they ask their House Rep or Senator to contact FICs the problem is solved almost immediately. But only for people who are lucky enough to live in a district represented by someone who supports their Second Amendment rights. For others. they are just out of luck.

We have been informed that the fees collected by FICS for firearms purchase background checks exceed the cost of the checks and subsidize other programs in the unit.

I would ask that you look very carefully at the performance and budget of the Firearms Check unit, because it certainly seems to us that the money could be better spent.