



February 9, 2021

To: Co-Chair Beyer, Co-Chair McLain, and Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation
From: Jason Wallis, Chief of Police, Port of Portland
Re: Passenger Terminal at Portland International Airport, HB 3055, Section 12

Co-Chairs and Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation:

My name is Jason Wallis. I am the Chief of Police at the Port of Portland. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today, and to testify on this important issue. I am a 26-year law enforcement veteran, 24 years of those serving at the Port of Portland police department; 6 years ago, I was named chief of police of the Port of Portland police. I was in front of this committee last February, during the 2020 Legislative Session, and my testimony today mirrors the comments I submitted a year ago.

My job – and the job of our police officers at the Port of Portland – is that of your typical police bureau: we enforce traffic laws on our properties, for example, and are generally speaking the law enforcement agency responsible for public safety at our properties. Most of our work is centered on the Portland International Airport, or PDX. My number one priority is to ensure the safety of everyone who utilizes our facilities.

And this is a diverse and large group of people. Last year, PDX was on schedule to surpass 20 million passengers annually – obviously that did not happen due to COVID-19. But we are confident that we will get back to a similar number of passengers at some point in the not-too-distant future. To put 20 million passengers annually in perspective: it means that, on average, 55,000 passengers would travel through PDX on a daily basis. That number is passengers leaving or arriving via airplanes and does not count their families and friends dropping them off or picking them up, or the nearly 11,000 people who pre- and hopefully also post-COVID work at PDX – from the airlines, airline services providers, the many great restaurants at PDX, or the Port of Portland. PDX has truly become a large airport – and we will continue to grow when it is once again safe for all to travel again.

This growth means we have to be even more diligent about public safety. Section 17 in HB 3055 helps us do just that. It fixes a simple glitch in statute and would make the passenger terminal a public building for the purposes of ORS 166.360. Let me be specific about what part of the terminal we are referencing. If this glitch is fixed, the following would be considered part of our public building: the doors coming into the terminal, our ticket lobby and baggage claim, our restaurants, restrooms and shops located pre-security, and essentially anything else before you officially go through TSA security (where you already can't bring a firearm).

This would bring us in line with our partners across the state. The language in Section 17 of HB 3055 would make our passenger terminal at PDX the same as the Eugene airport passenger terminal, or Redmond and Medford airports – where the terminals are already public buildings because they are operated by either city or county agencies; we are a municipality of the state of Oregon, which is the issue we want to address.

The proposed fix would make it so that our passenger terminal would essentially be just like the Capitol – you could still bring a firearm into the terminal if you are a law enforcement officer, or a CHL holder for example – although I want to make it clear that it is really not a great idea to bring firearms into an airport, let alone open carry. Nothing would change for passengers trying to safely check a firearm with an airline: the same procedures that apply to this situation today would still apply tomorrow.

Ultimately, this is about the safety of our passengers at PDX. Large numbers of people congregate in our passenger terminal, and this simple fix in statute would allow us to provide an additional layer of security to further protect the safety of our passengers. While we haven't had many incidences at PDX yet, we are hoping to fix this before something happens.

Thank you for your consideration of Section 17 in HB 3055. I'd be happy to answer any questions