

Dear Chair Representative Bynum, Vice-Chairs Representatives Noble and Power, and House Committee on Judiciary Members,

My name is Mason and I am a sixteen year old in Portland. I am testifying today in support of HB 2543, to close the Charleston Loophole.

My father is a gun owner, which means that I've grown up with a gun in my house. It has always been impressed on me, in my family, that guns are weapons. They are dangerous, and gun violence kills. So, if you're going to own one, you need to be responsible and put in your due diligence. Guns should not be in the hands of those who will use them to put our communities in harm's way. With stronger gun safety laws, we can make sure that we keep guns out of the hands of people who should not have them.

The Charleston Loophole gets its name from the 2015 shooting by a white man at the Mother Emanuel Church in Charleston, South Carolina. Nine Black Americans died by gun that day, in their place of worship. They were murdered by hatred, inequity, racism, and a lack of gun safety laws. The shooter used a gun that he would've been unable to purchase, were it not for the Charleston Loophole which allowed the purchase to be completed because the background check took longer than three days. Their deaths were preventable. This loophole still exists in Oregon, allowing people who should not have guns to purchase them if their background check takes longer than three days. We have a chance to change that though, through HB 2543, which would give law enforcement more than three business days to complete background checks on gun buyers, effectively closing the loophole and keeping guns out of the hands of people who should not have them.

The pandemic has exacerbated gun sales, and in turn has exacerbated the amount of background checks that must go through. Roughly 585,000 background checks have taken longer than three business days, in 2020. The number of background checks in Oregon increased by 100,000 in 2020, with 2,538 denials. With so many denials, and so many gun sales that go through without background checks, something has got to give. It is crucial that we keep our communities safe by making sure that gun safety is a top priority, and that means closing the Charleston Loophole. I urge you to vote yes on HB 2543. You will be saving lives.

Thank you,
Mason Drummond