

Good afternoon, members of the House Judiciary Committee and Representative Bynum. My name is Kristin Doherty and I am an advocate for gun violence prevention, I am a social worker, mother of 2 and I live in Southeast Portland. I am writing today in support of House Bill HB 2543, the bill that would close the "Charleston Loophole".

I am writing to ask you to please prioritize the passing of this incredibly important bill. As you know, the "Charleston Loophole" allows a gun sale to proceed if the background check takes longer than three business days. During the pandemic in Oregon, gun sales have skyrocketed and the background check system has become overwhelmed. Last year alone, there were twice as many prohibited buyers trying to get guns from dealers! It is estimated that at least 585,000 background checks will have taken longer than three business days in 2020.

If the system is overwhelmed, and there are more people trying to buy guns than usual then it is HIGHLY likely that guns will fall into the hands of people who absolutely should not have them. Just like what tragically happened on June 17th, 2015 when 9 people were murdered by an individual who should not have owned a gun at Emanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston, South Carolina.

As a social worker for over 30 years, I have worked with many women and children in domestic violence situations. If someone with a history of domestic abuse has access to guns this is a very terrifying and potentially tragic situation for so many women and their children. This is just one example of someone who should not have access to a gun.

It is our duty as citizens of this state to make sure that people who shouldn't have firearms are not able to bypass the background check system. In Oregon, 97% of background checks are resolved within minutes. In only 3% of cases, background check operators need more time to determine if the person is legally allowed to own a firearm. At least 19 states and Washington, DC give authorities longer than three business days to complete a background check. Oregon has the opportunity to be a leader on this issue. Law enforcement needs to be given the time to investigate the cases that fall into this category in order to save lives. It is a small thing to be able to do with a HUGE result for saving lives!

Background checks are the primary way we enforce our gun possession laws. They are the most comprehensive intervention method we have to keep guns out of the wrong hands.. It is common sense to prevent sales without a background check. Please, please, please vote yes on HB 2543!