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Augustana Lutheran Church

*"...and what does
the Lord require
of you but to do
justice, and to love
kindness, and to
walk humbly with
your God."
— Micah 6:8*

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Testimony Supporting HB 2543 Submitted by the Rev. Dr. W. J. Mark Knutson Senior Pastor, Augustana Lutheran Church, Portland, Oregon Chair, Lift Every Voice Oregon

11:00am Friday, February 19, 2021

I send this statement in full support of HB2543 as a long time proponent of public safety and the common good.

The fact is that the need for this measure was based on the shooting in the Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina where a fellow Alumni from the Doctoral Program at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington DC, the Rev. Dr. Clementa C. Pinckney, was murdered along with eight members of his congregation at the evening Bible Study by a man who never should have had a gun. Here is a brief summary of fact from Gifford's Law Center:

"In 2015, a disturbed young man shot and killed nine African-American worshippers at the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina. Although he should have failed a background check because of his history of unlawful controlled substance use, his background check was not processed within three days. **Under federal law, if an FFL who has initiated a background check has not been notified within three business days that the sale would violate federal or state laws, the dealer may proceed with the sale by default.**⁵ In this case, the dealer proceeded to transfer the gun after the three days elapsed. Approximately two months later, the shooter used that gun to murder the churchgoers."

The reality is that most Oregonians assume that a successful background check is required before a gun can be given to the buyer. We know that the vast majority of background checks are completed (well over 90%) the same day as the application, and certainly within 3 days. The few that are not completed within 3 days typically require records from another state or time to review some information that could affect whether the gun should be released to the buyer.

If a delay of a few days, or as long as it takes, could save lives, the state should have the time it needs for a complete and accurate background check. Even when applying for a driver's license, the Oregon DMV will check other states to be sure your license has not been suspended elsewhere. This is just common sense to do a complete check.

Again as Senior Pastor of Augustana Lutheran Church, Portland and as Chair of Lift Every Voice Oregon, I strongly recommend immediate passage of HB 2543.

As always with blessings and thanks for your vital work on behalf of all who call Oregon home,

Rev. Dr. W. J. Mark Knutson III