

Hello Chair Prozanski, Vice-chair Thatcher, and the rest of the legislators, citizens, and other interested parties listening in today.

Thanks for working hard for our state during some of the toughest situations we have faced in Oregon's history.

My name is Patrick McMullen, and I am a resident of the Buckman neighborhood in inner South East Portland.

I am submitting testimony today to voice respectful opposition to SB 554. I really admire and appreciate that many in our government are taking on issues that can have immediate and lasting impacts on the safety, security, and stability of our residents.

The reasons I oppose SB 554: the proposed legislation would only decrease safety and security for our residents; unnecessarily create a high likelihood of more criminal cases from non-violent offenders that would take valuable judicial and executive resources; and it would strip protections from thousands of vulnerable Oregonians - including the many women and people of color who purchased first firearms, obtained training, and legally secured concealed handgun licenses in 2020.

It's no secret that 2020 brought record gun sales, as fear and response to civil unrest, decreased police protection/response, increased criminal violence, and nationwide economic uncertainty drove millions to purchase their first firearms. 60% of new America gun owners in 2020 were women and people of color - two of the reported core demographics for Democrats in Oregon and across the country. There are also millions of new gun owners from the LGBT+ communities - all of these types of folks face disproportionate violence.

We know there are many legitimate reasons for minorities and women to protect themselves and their families, so we should be taking steps to keep vulnerable people safe - not creating laws that could make them felons and/or leave their legally obtained CHL permits dramatically less viable.

We also know that criminals don't follow laws - particularly gun laws. Removing the ability for trained, law-abiding CHL holders to carry their concealed firearms would not decrease the number of violent criminals - folks who already cannot legally purchase or own firearms - from carrying and using them on innocent citizens.

If folks can no longer legally carry their handguns concealed, another unintended and likely deleterious outcome would be that more folks would open carry firearms. Folks with CHL licenses could be open carrying loaded firearms - and there are countless studies and data showing that visible firearms makes tense situations worse.

We know that Portland specifically is facing a terrible surge in gun crimes. It's been demonstrated time and time again that gun crimes are overwhelmingly committed by folks who are already legally prevented from owning weapons. There are dozens (hundreds?) of actual criminals causing terror in our state, so how would it be helpful to create more work for our judicial and executive branches? Do we really want resources going to arresting, jailing, and prosecuting people who obtained legal CHL permits for carrying their guns to places they're currently legal?

This is also the right time to mention that the latest data for Portland Police response and 911 times are still far below targets and national benchmarks. The facts are simply that police in our biggest city are not available quickly when violence strikes. If we further restrict where our trained and law-abiding citizens can carry their registered handguns, historical data suggests that personal and property crimes will go up, as criminals bask in the confidence that only those who intend to do harm may have a concealed gun on them in public.

I've voted democrat my whole life - I voted for some of you in this meeting. And there are thousands of other democrat constituents who not only oppose SB 554, but demand our elected officials use the time and resources on bills that can bring us the help we need now.