

## **SB 554 Testimony—*Support*** **State of Safety Action**

Chair Prozanski and Members of the Committee:

My name is Henry Wessinger.

I am the President of State of Safety Action, an organization founded to reduce gun violence in Oregon using research and community-based policymaking. I am a resident of Multnomah County and I speak today in support of Senate Bill 554.

Given recent events in our country in multiple jurisdictions that include death threats against public employees and public officials carrying out their prescribed election related duties, kidnapping plots, intimidation and threats towards state and national lawmakers, and attempted insurgencies and armed intrusions in Washington D.C., the capitol building in Michigan, and our own capitol in Salem, Senate Bill 554 is an appropriate policy response to protect public officials and employees and restore our citizens' confidence in the safety of our public buildings and adjoining spaces.

Images of armed protesters last year in Portland and Salem, menacing and at times physically attacking counter-protesters and journalists, underscore the need for Senate Bill 554. Intimidation and thuggery are not protected forms of public protest, and the ability to defuse potential conflict by creating firearm free zones will be a useful tool for law enforcement to maintain safe space for public discourse, as well as being an important step in rebuilding our state's image in the national conscious.

Fears regarding personal safety expressed by Oregon Senate and House members over the past two years for other lawmakers carrying firearms in the Capitol should also be an important consideration supporting passage of Senate Bill 554.

We believe local jurisdictions should have the ability to regulate firearm possession in their public buildings in accordance with local needs and circumstances.

I urge your support of Senate Bill 554.

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