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On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary  
Measure: HB2007

Testimony in support of HB 2007.

This bill is a critical step in protecting Oregonians in the spaces where our democracy is defined, implemented and lived. There is evidence that concealed weapons contribute to higher gun violence rates and we must ask ourselves, why should we invite their presence in sensitive situations?.

What is the likelihood of someone carrying a gun into a heated discussion in, say, your local City Council meeting? An estimated nine million Americans carry loaded handguns in public each month, and three million Americans do so each day. The likelihood is higher than most of us think and has grown very significantly in recent years.

Do concealed weapon permits protect the public? Not according to evidence. Permissive concealed carry permitting laws are linked to an 8.6% higher firearm homicide rate, and 13-15% higher violent crime rates compared to may-issue states. At least 35 mass shootings have been carried out by concealed carry permit holders since May 2007.<sup>1</sup> Using news reports and public records, the Violence Policy Center (VPC) has documented that since May 2007, more than 1,000 people have died at the hands of persons who held concealed carry permits.<sup>2</sup> These incidents include the killings of 19 police officers. Are current permits screening processes effective? The VPC has also documented histories of domestic abuse, criminality, substance misuse, and suicidal behavior among many of the concealed carry holders who committed fatal shootings.

Our democracy is built on the right to convene and speak peacefully. Weak public carry laws, particularly open carry laws, however can promote a culture of intimidation. While everyone has a right to speak and assemble freely, the overt or covert presence of weapons threatens that right.

Why might we be afraid to enact laws that better protect public spaces? Public opinion is in favor of restrictions. A 2015 national survey found large majorities of the public opposed laws allowing concealed carry permit holders to carry firearms on college campuses (64.3%), or in places of worship (65.8%), government buildings (66.8%), schools (69.3%), bars (69.4%), or sports stadiums (70.1%).<sup>3</sup>

This is evidence that concealed weapons are a threat to the public and this must be considered a public health crisis. A critical step to address this crisis is to allow governing bodies of certain public entities that own or control public building to adopt policy, ordinance or regulation or precluding affirmative defense for possession of firearms in public building and adjacent grounds by concealed handgun licensees.

1. Rowhani-Rahbar, et al. (2017); Siegal, et al. (2017); Donohue, et al. (2019); Violence Policy Center (2019).

2. Violence Policy Center. Concealed Carry Killers. Available at: <http://concealedcarrykillers.org/>. Last visited: August 21, 2017

3. Wolfson JA, Teret SP, Azrael D, Miller M. US public opinion on carrying firearms in public places. *American Journal of Public Health* 2017; 107:929-937.