

## Testimony by Jake Chandler to the Oregon Senate Judiciary Committee

March 5, 2024

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and esteemed members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs).

My name is Jake Chandler, and I currently serve as an Investigator at the Deschutes County District Attorney's Office. Prior to my tenure at the District Attorney's Office, I held positions as a police officer at the City of Bend Police Department and the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department in Nevada, accumulating over 16 years of experience in law enforcement.

During my final three years with the Bend Police Department, I was assigned to the Community Response Team, where I responded to mental health-related police calls and conducted outreach at various mental health treatment centers. It was during this time that I became acutely aware of the need for preventive measures to address instances of severe mental illness culminating in violence.

While on the Community Response Team, I became aware of two different tragic cases where people were killed and the suspects were reported to have been mentally ill. I attempted to see if there was anything available to prevent this from happening in the future.

My journey with ERPOs began in 2018 when I stumbled upon this crucial tool while researching solutions to prevent tragic outcomes involving individuals with homicidal and suicidal ideations. Upon researching, I discovered that the Redmond Police Department was the sole agency in Central Oregon to have previously submitted an ERPO application. However, this application was denied. I did not pursue further details regarding the denial or the specifics of the case.

Witnessing firsthand the potential of ERPOs to intervene and prevent violence, my team and I began applying for ERPOs in cases where we believed individuals posed a significant risk to themselves or others. As my research into ERPOs progressed, I encountered an individual whom I deemed suitable for such an order. While I cannot recall the exact details of the initial ERPO filing, I vividly remember the individual in question exhibiting both homicidal and suicidal tendencies.

He disclosed plans to procure a firearm, intending to provoke a confrontation with law enforcement. His belief was that if he didn't engage the police in gunfire, they wouldn't respond lethally. After obtaining the ERPO, I maintained contact with him, witnessing a remarkable shift. The weight of his burden lifted,

and he no longer fixated on obtaining a firearm to carry out his plan, potentially saving his life and those of responding officers.

I'd like to emphasize this point for the committee: This example demonstrates that ERPOs can reduce injury and deaths in the community AND also reduce violence and threats faced by law enforcement.

Following the submission of this initial ERPO, our Community Response Team took proactive measures to apply for ERPOs in relevant cases. We only applied for ERPO's on people that we believed were at risk for suicide or homicide and they would attempt to carry out their plans if we did not intervene.

Currently, Deschutes County has emerged as a leader in ERPO implementation, filing more orders than any other county in Oregon. From January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023 Deschutes County filed 43 Extreme Risk Protection Orders. The next closest county was Multnomah with 21 ERPO's filed. (According to the Oregon Judicial Department.)

Deschutes County's notably high ERPO application rate can be attributed to the comprehensive training available locally, as well as the accessibility of resources provided by myself and Kecia. I receive inquiries from officers seeking guidance on ERPO procedures at least once a week, often stemming from their participation in training sessions I have conducted or through word-of-mouth referrals.

I'd like to highlight the training program that Kecia and I facilitate, which encompasses comprehensive modules covering case studies, pertinent Oregon laws, personal narratives reflecting our challenges, the intricacies of drafting an ERPO, the process of filing it with the courts, and effectively testifying before judges. This robust training initiative, coupled with our ongoing availability as a resource, has significantly contributed to the increased utilization of ERPOs in Deschutes County compared to others.

Initially tailored for law enforcement, Kecia and I have broadened our training scope to include other community organizations beyond the police. This expansion allows us to empower a diverse range of support groups, enabling them to assist families in applying for ERPOs when involving the police may not be feasible.

Although ERPOs are not a cure-all, they are undeniably a vital tool in our efforts to prevent firearm-related tragedies such as homicides and suicides. Our firsthand experiences have shown us the life-saving potential of these orders when implemented thoughtfully. As such, I implore ongoing support for this essential intervention strategy as we endeavor to protect and secure our communities.

\*Thank you very much for allowing me to speak today. \*