



Testimony of Emily Walsh
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In Support of H.B. 4145

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Chair Kropf, Vice Chairs Chotzen and Wallan, and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am a Law and Policy Advisor with the Center for Gun Violence Solutions at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. The Center for Gun Violence Solutions conducts rigorous research to drive effective solutions to gun violence. We advocate for the policies that are supported by strong evidence and permit to purchase laws like Oregon's are one of our top policy priorities.

Oregon's Permit to Purchase Technical Fix Bill (H.B. 4145)

H.B. 4145 makes important technical fixes to Oregon's existing permit to purchase law. These technical fixes are essential to ensure that Oregon can reap the full benefits of this policy once it goes into effect. Critically, these fixes were developed in consultation with the agencies that will be responsible for administering the law.

One of H.B. 4145's provisions is the delay in implementation until January 1, 2028. This delay, in conjunction with the other necessary technical fixes in this bill, will give all relevant agencies the time to develop the permit to purchase system so it can function effectively for all prospective gun purchasers. This timeline also accounts for the Oregon Supreme Court's decision on the constitutionality of the law, which is expected over the next few months. The Oregon Court of Appeals upheld its constitutionality,¹ and if the Oregon Supreme Court does the same, this delay means that State agencies will have adequate time to stand up the program.

It is also worth noting that the extension from 30 to 60 days within which a permitting agent must issue a decision regarding an application merely establishes the maximum amount of time, to account for the possibility of unexpected delays. Most applications will likely be processed within significantly less time—indeed, other states with similar policies report being able to process applications much more quickly than the statutory limit. Increasing the outer limit merely gives the agency flexibility to account for the rare cases that require additional processing time.

¹ *Arnold v. Kotek*, 338 Or. App. 556, review allowed, 373 Or. 738, 571 P.3d 1096 (2025).



Evidence Supports the Effectiveness of Permit to Purchase Laws

Research shows that permit to purchase laws are associated with reductions in all forms of gun violence, from firearm homicides to suicides. For example, Connecticut's permit to purchase law was associated with a 28% reduction in the state's firearm homicide rate and a 33% reduction in firearm suicides.² Conversely, the years following Missouri's repeal of its permit to purchase law saw a 25% increase³ in firearm homicides and a 16% increase⁴ in firearm suicides.

This policy has the potential to save hundreds of Oregonians lives in the years following implementation: According to the data, if Oregon had adopted a permit to purchase law when Connecticut did in 1995, 210 fewer firearm homicides and 630 fewer firearm suicides would be expected over the first 10 years, amounting to a total of 840 fewer lives lost just between 1995-2005.⁵

Permit to purchase laws are also associated with reductions in mass shootings (both frequency of incidents, and the number of victims)⁶ and a 28% lower rate of shootings by police,⁷ presumably due to fewer police encounters involving armed persons. Permit to purchase laws are also associated with reductions in the diversion of firearms into the criminal market, resulting in fewer crime guns recovered by police both within

² See Rudolph KE, Stuart EA, Vernick JS, & Webster DW, *Association between Connecticut's permit-to-purchase handgun law and homicides*, AM. J. OF PUB. HEALTH (2015); Crifasi CK, Meyers JS, Vernick JS, & Webster DW, *Effects of changes in permit-to-purchase handgun laws in Connecticut and Missouri on suicide rates*, PREVENTIVE MEDICINE (2015).

³ Webster D, Crifasi CK, & Vernick JS, *Effects of the repeal of Missouri's handgun purchaser licensing law on homicides*, J. OF URBAN HEALTH (2014).

⁴ Crifasi CK, Meyers JS, Vernick JS, & Webster DW, *Effects of changes in permit-to-purchase handgun laws in Connecticut and Missouri on suicide rates*, PREVENTIVE MEDICINE (2015).

⁵ Augmented synthetic control methods were used for estimating the causal effects of Connecticut's 1995 Handgun Purchaser Licensing law on firearm homicide and firearm suicide rates for the first ten full years following the law was in effect (1996- 2005) for the overall population and within specific demographic strata that have different levels of baseline rates of firearm mortality. Researchers applied strata-specific estimates of Connecticut's law in terms of percentage change from the estimated counterfactual to the rates within demographic subgroups that Oregon experienced from 1996-2005 to account for differences in demographic composition between Connecticut and Oregon. Estimates range from 703 to 840 fewer handgun-related deaths, depending on the demographic subgroup used for stratification.

⁶ Webster DW, McCourt AD, Crifasi CK, Booty MD, & Stuart EA, *Evidence concerning the regulation of firearms design, sale, and carrying on fatal mass shootings in the United States*, CRIMINOLOGY & PUB. POL'Y (2020).

⁷ Crifasi CK, Ward J, McCourt AD, Webster D, & Doucette ML, *The association between permit-to-purchase laws and shootings by police*, INJURY EPIDEMIOLOGY (2023).



the state and in other states.⁸ Finally, laws like Oregon's that include a fingerprinting step in the permit process were specifically associated with a 45% decrease in interstate firearm trafficking.⁹

Shall-Issue Permit to Purchase Laws Comport with the Second Amendment

In *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen*,¹⁰ the Supreme Court established the governing standard for evaluating the constitutionality of modern firearm laws under the Second Amendment and struck down New York's "may-issue" concealed carry licensing law. Concealed carry licensing authorizes an individual to carry a concealed firearm in public, which differs from permit to purchase policies which require an individual to obtain a permit prior to purchasing a firearm—but the Court's holding regarding shall-issue public carry licensing laws should apply equally to permit to purchase laws. The Court was careful to state that its decision in *Bruen* did not call into question the constitutionality of "shall-issue" public carry licensing laws: It held that rather than violating the rights of law-abiding citizens, shall-issue public carry licensing laws "are designed to ensure only that those bearing arms in the jurisdiction are, in fact, 'law-abiding, responsible citizens.'" ¹¹ Justice Kavanaugh similarly cautioned that the majority's decision did not prohibit states from imposing public carry licensing laws.¹²

Courts have overwhelmingly upheld states' permit to purchase (also known as firearm purchaser licensing) laws against Second Amendment challenges. In Illinois, for

⁸ See, e.g., Webster DW, Vernick JS, & Hepburn LM, *Relationship between licensing, registration, and other gun sales laws and the source state of crime guns*, Injury Prevention (2001); Crifasi CK, Buggs SAL, Choksy S, Webster DW, *The Initial Impact of Maryland's Firearm Safety Act of 2013 on the Supply of Crime Handguns in Baltimore*, J. OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES (2017); Webster DW, Vernick JS, McGinty EE, & Alcorn T, *Preventing the diversion of guns to criminals through effective firearm sales laws*, WEBSTER D, VERNICK J, EDS. REDUCING GUN VIOLENCE IN AMERICA: INFORMING POLICY WITH EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS (2013); Collins T, Greenberg R, Siegel M, Xuan Z, Rothman EF, Cronin SW, & Hemenway D, *State firearm laws and the interstate transfer of guns in the USA, 2006-2016*, J. OF URBAN HEALTH (2018).

⁹ Webster DW, Vernick JS, McGinty EE, & Alcorn T, *Preventing the diversion of guns to criminals through effective firearm sales laws*, WEBSTER D, VERNICK J, EDS. REDUCING GUN VIOLENCE IN AMERICA: INFORMING POLICY WITH EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS (2013).

¹⁰ *New York State Rifle & Pistol Ass'n, Inc. v. Bruen*, 597 U.S. 1 (2022).

¹¹ *Id.* at 39, n.9 ("Rather, it appears that these shall-issue regimes, which often require applicants to undergo a background check or pass a firearms safety course, are designed to ensure only that those bearing arms in the jurisdiction are, in fact, 'law-abiding, responsible citizens.'") (quoting *D.C. v. Heller*, 554 U.S. 570, 635 (2008)).

¹² *Id.* at 79 ("... [T]he Court's decision does not prohibit States from imposing licensing requirements for carrying a handgun for self-defense. . . . Those shall-issue regimes may require a license applicant to undergo fingerprinting, a background check, a mental health records check, and training in firearms handling and in laws regarding the use of force, among other possible requirements.") (Kavanaugh, J., concurring).



instance, a circuit court determined that the State's equivalent of a permit to purchase law was similar enough to historical laws that have consistently regulated firearm possession "to ensure that only qualified individuals possessed firearms, to identify who possessed guns and what types, and to require gun owners to subsidize the costs of public safety."¹³ The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit similarly upheld Maryland's permit to purchase law, noting that it is precisely the type of "shall-issue" policy that the Supreme Court found constitutionally permissible under *Bruen*.¹⁴ Finally, the U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon upheld this very law against a Second Amendment challenge, stating that its objective standards operate to ensure that only law-abiding, responsible citizens may carry arms, as permitted under *Bruen*.¹⁵

In short, the Supreme Court has repeatedly asserted that regulating access to firearms by certain individuals is permissible, and permit to purchase laws like Oregon's help ensure that only law-abiding, responsible persons can access firearms.

The Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions Supports H.B. 4145

The technical fixes included in H.B. 4145 will give the State the time and the tools that it needs to develop the infrastructure for Oregon's permit to purchase system and effectively administer the law once implemented. The Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions supports this bill and urges you to vote for its passage.

¹³ *Guns Save Life, Inc. v. Kelly*, No. 2019 CH 180, at 12 (July 18, 2023), *aff'd*, *Guns Save Life, Inc. v. Kelly*, 2025 IL App (4th) 230662 (Apr. 29, 2025).

¹⁴ *Maryland Shall Issue, Inc. v. Moore*, 116 F.4th 211, 221-25 (4th Cir. 2024), *cert. denied*, 145 S. Ct. 1049 (2025).

¹⁵ *Oregon Firearms Fed'n v. Kotek*, 682 F. Supp. 3d 874, 947 (D. Or. 2023).