

Public Testimony on House Bill 4145
February 27, 2026

Position on measure: Oppose

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I oppose House Bill 4145 in its current form. While I understand the goal of addressing violence through a permit-to-purchase system, HB 4145 layers on new inequities that fall heavily on ordinary Oregonians while carving out broad exemptions for law enforcement.

HB 4145 continues a discretionary permit-to-purchase regime in which a “permit agent” may deny a permit when the agent concludes that an applicant “does not present reasonable grounds” to show they are not “reasonably likely to be a danger to self or others, or to the community at large,” based on mental or psychological state or a “past pattern of behavior involving unlawful violence or threats of unlawful violence.” This kind of open-ended standard, combined with mandatory fingerprinting, photographing, and broad investigative authority for permit agents, creates ample room for subjective judgment. In practice, it invites discrimination against civilians based on race, ethnicity, age, social status, appearance, or other biases that are difficult to prove after the fact. All Oregonians should have an equal opportunity to obtain a permit-to-purchase a firearm for personal defense, hunting, sport, and as a long-recognized safeguard of civil liberties against government overreach, yet HB 4145 makes that opportunity contingent on the personal perceptions of a government agent rather than on clear, objective disqualifiers in law.

The bill is especially troubling because it does not apply these hurdles equally. HB 4145 establishes exceptions to the permit requirement and the large-capacity magazine prohibition for certain active and retired law enforcement officers and other government actors. While regular Oregonians must pay higher fees, be fingerprinted, and comply with limits on magazine capacity, qualifying law enforcement personnel are exempt from the permit-to-purchase requirement and may possess and use large-capacity magazines, including outside their official duties. This creates two classes of citizens: government employees with effectively unrestricted access to arms and magazines, and everyone else who must navigate an expensive and discretionary system.

I am also deeply concerned that HB 4145 expands privileges for a profession with documented elevated rates of domestic violence (a question currently on the firearm bill of sale and the form 4473). Multiple studies find police families experience domestic violence at two to four times the general population rate (24–40% vs. ~10%), with a nationwide analysis documenting over 2,300 officer arrests for DV from 2005–2009 alone. This is a policy concern about accountability, not individual officers. When rates exceed the public’s, categorical exemptions from civilian rules warrant scrutiny. The higher fees and training costs also burden lower-income Oregonians disproportionately, while government employees face fewer barriers.

I appreciate Representative Farrah Chaichi’s clear vote explanation for HB 4145-A dated February 26, 2026 (available at <https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/pcive/HB%204145-A%20Chaichi%202-26-2026.pdf>), which thoughtfully outlines her reasoning and commitment to balancing public safety with individual rights. Her transparency exemplifies the careful legislative process Oregon needs on this issue.

I’m a gun owner myself, and I want more gun control. I want more protections in order for Oregonians to obtain firearms. More barriers can save lives. But I don’t think HB 4145 is the correct way to do it.

For these reasons, I urge the rejection of HB 4145 in its current form and support a comprehensive rewrite or different bill addressing these inequities. Reforms should apply objective standards equally to all, eliminate law-enforcement-only carve-outs, use clear disqualifiers tied to due process, and reduce costs for citizens. To quote Representative Chaichi: "We must meaningfully engage with the systemic issues that lead to gun violence, and address them, not compound them with our lawmaking."

Thank you for considering this testimony in pursuit of both public safety and equal treatment under law.

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