



## **Statement *in support of SB941* Background checks for transfer of firearms**

House Rules Committee

Chair Hoyle, Vice Chairs Smith Warner and Gilliam and members of the House Committee on Rules:

My name is Otto Schell and I am a legislative advocate for the Oregon PTA. The PTA, or Parent Teacher Association, is a national and state-based organization that brings together students, parents and educators to champion the educational success of our children, and in Oregon, the PTA includes approximately 240 local chapters, and represents more than 12,000 members and a 100 year history of advocacy in Oregon.

### **Oregon PTA supports common sense solutions to reduce gun violence.**

A key priority of the Oregon PTA is to ensure the health and safety of students, not only while they are in school but throughout the broader community. That is why our organization officially supports closing the background checks loophole in Oregon, and believes that sufficient funding should be provided to the Oregon State Police to ensure that background checks are enforced. On behalf of Oregon PTA and as someone advocating for our children's best interests, we urge you **to support Senate Bill 941**.

**Children living in communities with exposure to daily gun violence feel not only the physical effects of gun violence**, but psychological ones as well. Studies have shown that children who grow up in communities with frequent violence are much more likely to exhibit symptoms of anger, stress and withdrawal.<sup>1</sup> Such exposure to violence makes it difficult for children to focus at school, and can lead to developmental issues over time.

### **Closing Oregon's background check loophole for firearms purchases:**

The impact of gun violence on the lives of children makes this an issue of critical importance to the PTA. Senate Bill 941 is a crucial step in reducing gun violence in Oregon by **preventing dangerous people from having easy access to guns**. Oregon currently has a loophole in our state law that allows dangerous people, such as convicted felons and domestic abusers to buy guns through private sales without a background check and with no questions asked. This gap in the law undermines our state's otherwise strong gun laws and creates the opportunity for dangerous people to get their hands on guns with minimal effort.

**We should all be united in wanting to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people.**

**Background checks on all gun sales are a common sense solution to this problem, and one we know works.** Background checks stop many individuals with disqualifying criminal records from purchasing guns in Oregon each year—in 2012, more than 2,300 sales to prohibited purchasers were blocked.<sup>2</sup> Senate Bill 941 seeks to bring this reduction in gun violence to Oregon, by requiring that any individual attempting to purchase a gun pass a background check, proving that they are not legally prohibited from buying or possessing a firearm. And your constituents, **the people of Oregon overwhelmingly support this measure.** A January 2015 poll found that **87 percent Oregonians support** requiring that everyone pass a background check before purchasing a gun, regardless of whether they buy the gun from a licensed dealer or a private seller.<sup>3</sup>

**Oregon PTA believes every firearm purchaser must be qualified and screened:**

The current loophole in Oregon law that lets individuals buy guns without passing a background check is akin to letting some people skip security screening at an airport—it makes no sense to let some individuals, who could be armed or dangerous, bypass security. Keeping our children and communities safe from gun violence begins with having strong laws and policies in place.

**The Oregon PTA firmly believes that SB941 will make our schools and communities safer.**

**We urge you to VOTE YES on SB941.**

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<sup>1</sup> James Garbarino, Catherine Bradshaw, and Joseph Vorrasi, “Mitigating the Effects of Gun Violence on Children and Youth,” *Children, Youth, and Gun Violence* 12(2): 73-85, 2002, available at <http://futureofchildren.org/publications/journals/article/index.xml?journalid=42&articleid=166&sectionid=1068>.

<sup>2</sup> Josie Henderson and James Scott, “My View: Block gun violence with background checks,” *Portland Tribune*, February 13, 2014, available at <http://portlandtribune.com/pt/10-opinion/210597-68298-my-view-block-gun-violence-with-background-checks>.

<sup>3</sup> Hannah Hoffman, “Gun background checks returning to Oregon Legislature,” *Statesman Journal*, January 30, 2015, available at <http://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/news/politics/2015/01/29/gun-background-checks-returning-oregon-legislature/22539803/>.