



**SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE
HOUSE MAJORITY OFFICE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 21, 2023

Press Contact:

Tess Seger, Tess.Seger@oregonlegislature.gov

Hannah Kurowski, Hannah.Kurowski@oregonlegislature.gov

Democrats Take Action to Protect Oregon Communities

New laws will keep guns out of the hands of dangerous criminals, work to fix the public defense crisis, establish penalties for possession of fentanyl, and more.

SALEM, Ore - Today, the Oregon Legislature's public safety champions joined Governor Tina Kotek as she signed a slew of bills aimed at protecting Oregonians' safety in communities across the state.

The legislation signed into law will keep guns out of the hands of dangerous criminals, work to fix the public defense crisis, establish penalties for possession of fentanyl, increase support for crime victims, fund children's advocacy centers and more training opportunities for law enforcement, and establish a Juvenile Justice Policy Commission.

Improving public safety is a top priority for Oregon Democrats. In 2023, the [House](#) and [Senate](#) Democratic Caucuses worked to pass urgent, impactful solutions to make Oregon communities safer for everyone.

Preventing Gun Crimes ([House Bill 2005](#))

Ghost guns are unserialized and undetectable, making them the gun of choice for gun traffickers, violent criminals, and people legally prohibited from buying firearms. HB 2005 prohibits the sale, manufacturing, or importing of ghost guns. This legislation will take on gun violence, help law enforcement do their jobs, and prioritize public safety, all while respecting responsible gun ownership.

Ghost guns are the fastest-growing gun safety problem facing our country, and the number of ghost guns recovered by law enforcement in the US has [increased at an alarming rate](#).

“When guns are the number one cause of death for children in the United States and gun violence continues to rise, it is high time to take action,” **said Representative Lisa Reynolds (D - NE Washington County)**, a pediatrician and co-chief sponsor of HB 2005. “Every single Oregonian has the right to feel safe in their communities. Today, we are making Oregon a safer place.”

“As a former Law Enforcement Officer, I know how important it is to community safety that we get dangerous ghost guns off of our streets. We’ve been working for years to pass the protections in HB 2005, and I’m so proud that we could finally get this done. This new law provides local law enforcement with the tools they need to take these untraceable weapons out of the hands of criminals,” **said Senator James I. Manning Jr. (D - Eugene)**, retired U.S. Army veteran, a former Law Enforcement Officer, and co-chief sponsor of HB 2005.

“We owe action to our children, to our teachers, to every family that kisses their loved ones goodbye in the morning. We owe action to law enforcement who increasingly are risking their own lives and safety,” **said Representative Dacia Grayber (D - SW Portland & East Beaverton)**, a first responder, co-chief sponsor of HB 2005, and member of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety.

Under HB 2005, people convicted of possession of an untraceable firearm will face a misdemeanor on the first offense, which carries up to 364 days in jail, a \$6,250, or both. Second offenses and beyond would carry up to 10 years in prison, a \$250,000 fine, or both.

Law-abiding gun owners will have until September 2024 to register any unserialized guns with their local sheriff’s department.

HB 2005 is the result of extensive outreach with communities across the state, including gun owners and enthusiasts, hunters, retailers, the Department of Justice, local governments, advocates and survivors of gun violence. The legislation comes as a recommendation from the Gun Violence Prevention work group, formed last summer. Members of the work group include Representatives Jason Kropf, an attorney and gun owner; Lisa Reynolds, a pediatrician; Paul Evans, a veteran, hunter, and gun owner; and Dacia Grayber, a firefighter and gun owner.

This session, legislators' public safety budget also [dedicated](#) \$10 million for community violence prevention and intervention ([House Bill 5506](#)) through a fund created in 2022 as part of the Victim and Survivor Services Division of the Department of Justice to support programs like

Healing Hurt People. Additionally, the legislature established a workgroup to study policy solutions to gun violence and suicide prevention.

Fixing the Public Defense Crisis ([Senate Bill 337](#))

Access to defense counsel is a constitutional right, but Oregon does not currently have enough public defenders to meet this need. That's why this session, Oregon Democrats laid out a plan to address this ongoing crisis.

“Oregonians are counting on us to have a justice system that is fair and functional. This is an all-hands-on-deck moment. These reforms and investments were crafted in consultation with the experts who deal with this crisis every day, and it’s our intention that these solutions will make Oregon more safe and just,” **said Senator Janeen Sollman (D - Hillsboro)**, co-chair of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety who co-carried SB 337 on the Senate Floor.

“We are in a public defense crisis,” **said Representative Paul Evans (D - Monmouth, Independence, West/South Salem)**, co-chair of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety who co-led the [Three Branch workgroup](#) and co-carried SB 337 on the House floor. “The work we did this session will help us meet urgent need through targeted investments and necessary structural reforms, allowing for a more effective and reliable public defense system moving forward.”

“Our justice system and the safety of Oregon communities depend on every defendant having access to timely legal counsel. SB 337 provides jurisdictions around the state with the resources they need to fix this crisis now,” **said Senator Kate Lieber (D - Beaverton & SW Portland)**, a former prosecutor who co-carried SB 337 on the Senate floor.

Senate Bill 337 will address this shortage of public defenders by:

- Modifying the composition of the commission, moving the commission from the Judicial Branch to the Executive Branch and changing the name from “Public Defense Services Commission” to the “Oregon Public Defense Commission”
- Reforming the pay structure and increasing pay for public defenders, while prohibiting models shown to lead to less effective representation of defendants.
- Requiring the Oregon Public Defense Commission to set standards for public defenders and report regularly to the legislature on their standards and oversight.
- Updating the model for the employment of public defenders – including establishing a trial division within the commission that directly hires attorneys – and allowing public defense providers across the state to contract directly with the commission.
- Creating regional hubs to directly address the unrepresented crisis

Establishing Penalties for Possession of Fentanyl ([House Bill 2645](#))

HB 2645 creates a Class A misdemeanor penalty for possession of certain amounts of fentanyl. [Fentanyl](#), a newer and more dangerous drug, is 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. According to the [Oregon Health Authority](#), 1,275 people suffered from a deadly fentanyl overdose in Oregon in 2021.

“Oregon is not immune to the fentanyl epidemic that is tearing communities apart in every corner of this country. This is one of many steps that we are taking to save lives and prevent dangerous drugs from being sold in our neighborhoods,” **said Senator Floyd Prozanski (D - Springfield & Eugene)**, chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee who co-led the [Three Branch workgroup](#) and a co-chief sponsor of HB 2645.

This bipartisan legislation will take fentanyl dealers off our streets and protect our communities from this dangerous drug.

Improving the Crime Victims’ Compensation Program ([House Bill 2676](#))

HB 2676 makes critical updates to Oregon’s Crime Victims’ Compensation Program, expanding eligibility criteria, reducing barriers to accessing compensation and increasing benefits for Oregonians impacted by violent crime. HB 2676 increases maximum expense reimbursement amounts for counseling and funeral costs, clarifies strangulation forensic evidence kits as a compensable expense and provides lost wage compensation for parents taking time off to care for a minor victim, amongst other updates. These changes will make it easier for victims and survivors to access benefits for the duration of a case, including during the post-prosecution criminal justice process.

“We must ensure individuals and communities have the resources and support they need to recover and heal,” **said Representative Jason Kropf (D - Bend)**, chair of the House Judiciary Committee and a chief sponsor of HB 2676. “Through this legislation, we are ensuring the Crime Victims’ Compensation Program is able to better meet the needs of Oregonians who have experienced unthinkable tragedies and are dealing with the ensuing emotional, mental, physical and financial aftermath.”

Funding for Children’s Advocacy Centers ([House Bill 2732](#))

HB 2732 allocates \$6 million for children’s advocacy centers, places in our community that help kids who have been physically or sexually abused and work to prevent future abuse.

“Children’s advocacy centers ensure children and youth have ready access to the medical care and counseling they need in the aftermath of abuse, and they collect and preserve critical evidence necessary to seek justice and prevent future abuse. I’m so proud that we could fund

these critical children’s advocacy centers to make sure every young survivor gets the professional, compassionate support and advocacy they need and deserve,” **said Senator Sara Gelser Blouin (D - Corvallis)**, a co-chief sponsor of HB 2732 and member of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

“Part of making our communities safer is ensuring crime victims have the support they need. No one should face these experiences alone or without timely, affordable, expert assistance,” **said Representative Reynolds (D - NE Washington County), chair of the House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services.**

“It’s incredibly important that kids dealing with the horrors of physical and sexual abuse have safe adults and resources to turn to in their time of crisis. By funding these centers, we’re going to keep kids safe and help them break the cycle of abuse,” **said Senator Winsvey Campos (D - Aloha)**, a co-chief sponsor of HB 2732.

Funding for Law Enforcement Training ([Senate Bill 5533](#))

Provides the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training \$6.4 million to address the current backlog and forecasted demand for the basic police course. It will increase the number of standard classes offered and provide funding and position authority to establish a pilot program for additional, higher-capacity basic police course classes to run concurrently with the standard classes. The Department is required to create a safety plan for the pilot program, provide a status report during operation, and a final report at the conclusion of the classes. Funding is also allocated to state police to operate their own basic police course classes. These investments will open up significantly more training opportunities for law enforcement officers around the state.

“We need more officers trained to protect our communities, but we don’t have enough capacity in our current programs to meet this demand. This is a simple fix that will make a big difference for our police departments struggling to keep up with crises on our streets and the Oregonians they serve and protect,” **said Senator Chris Gorsek (D - Gresham)**, a retired law enforcement officer and member of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety.

“This law builds on our previous efforts to bolster police accountability and training. It unquestionably saves lives by giving police officers the tools and knowledge they need to do their job and hold them accountable to each other and to the communities they serve,” **said Representative Janelle Bynum (D - Happy Valley & N Clackamas County).**

Creating the Juvenile Justice Policy Commission ([House Bill 2320](#))

Oregon does not have a statewide policy development forum for those involved with the juvenile justice system. This bill establishes a Juvenile Justice Policy Commission to analyze

our current system and provide data driven policy recommendations for improvement to the legislature. The first report is due September 1, 2024 and regular updates will be provided every two years.

###