

Dozens of occupations in the private and public sector require a criminal background check -- like home care workers; school employees including teachers and bus drivers; medical professionals like dentists, physicians, counselors and therapists; and escrow agents. Those background checks protect all Oregonians: think about children, seniors, and consumers – all of us. We expect those background checks to be thorough, and rely on them.

But after digging deeper into the details of the process, I discovered that not all information from criminal convictions in Oregon is available on a state system. Some criminal convictions are through local courts – municipal or justice courts – and not every court sends all, or any, conviction information to a state system. We know that some local courts handle more than just traffic violations. They deal with crimes such as Assault IV, Theft, and DUI. That means that not only is the conviction information missing for a complete background check, but it is also not available to law enforcement officers, judges, or other court officials who could use the information.

Oregon has more than 170 local courts: 141 municipal courts, and 32 justice courts. Those courts don't operate as an organized system, and don't report to the state circuit court system, so we don't have a way of knowing which ones send how much, if any, conviction data to the state. We have heard some do. And we know that some don't.

This bill requires local courts - justice and municipal courts - to send judgment and conviction data to the state justice system. If they already do, they don't need to do anything new.

I've checked in with several law enforcement officers and their representatives, state judges, the Oregon Association of Municipal Court Judges, Association of Oregon Counties, League of Oregon Cities, and my own municipal court judge ... about the purpose of the bill, and the impact on court operations. League of Oregon Cities explains that it's not a significant impact, and as pointed out in testimony to the House Judiciary Committee, it's vital for District Attorneys to know what a person's criminal record is. Judges, D.A.'s, law enforcement officers, and persons authorized to do background checks should have the *full* picture of convictions from *any* city or county.

Think about the home care workers and children's' advocates, the Elder Abuse Task Force; consumers, and employees and employers; we should close this gap in protecting the public. I'd appreciate your Aye vote. Thank you.