

# Social Policy

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2/22/2021

By Marge Easley, Bill Walsh, Nancy Donovan, Karen Nibler and Debbie Aiona, Social Policy Portfolio

## Gun Safety (Marge Easley)

The League testified on [HB 2543](#), which eliminates the Charleston Loophole in Oregon, in the House Judiciary hearing on February 18. The loophole was named after the 2015 killing of nine Charleston churchgoers by a white supremacist. Current law allows a gun purchase to proceed if the Oregon State Police are unable to complete a background check after three days. This bill prohibits the transfer of the firearm by a gun dealer or private party without the completion of a background check. It is needed now more than ever, given the recent large increases in the number of gun purchases, the likelihood of backlogs for background check completion, and the very real danger that more individuals will slip through the loophole and obtain firearms illegally.

[SB 554](#), which allows local jurisdictions, including cities, counties, PDX, school districts, colleges, and universities to adopt ordinances or policies to forbid possession of firearms in public buildings, is slated to be heard

in the Senate Judiciary Committee on February 22. Current law excludes concealed carry holders from firearm prohibitions. This bill allows local discretion to remove that exception.

## Health and Human Services (Karen Nibler)

The Senate Judiciary Committee discussed the implementation of BM 110, the decriminalization of small amounts of illegal drugs. Fines will be charged but they can be waived by calling in for an assessment and referrals to community resources. Marcus Mundy from the Coalition of Communities of Color and Larry Turner of Fresh Out in Multnomah County talked about services for those who were charged and/or sentenced with drug offenses. Funding for Treatment of Addictions is needed as a resource for addicted users.

Marijuana Tax funds will be transferred for Addiction Services but it may defund current county drug treatment services. The Behavioral Health staff will be considering crisis response and stabilization services throughout the state.

SB 572 proposes guardianship for 18-21 year old immigrant youth who have no family in this country. The Guardians would not be vetted by the court but would volunteer to provide protections for these youth. This bill already passed.

The House Human Services Committee reviewed the Court Appointed Special Advocates program, which has been under the supervision of the Department of Administrative Services. HB 2387 directs DAS to contract with a non-governmental entity to support the advocacy for children in court custody and the family needs. HB 2738 sets a budget for training of volunteers in 22 programs throughout the state.

The House Judiciary Committee heard from the Oregon Justice Resource Center, a public interest law firm, which supports the Women's Justice pilot program for women exiting Coffee Creek Correctional Facility. 3

attorneys work with women on legal issues in reentry for official documents, child custody, and civil actions. HB 2912 requests the program be extended past the 7-2-21 ending date.

The Criminal Justice Commission monitors the WJRC program and will be reviewing the grant through the Ways and Means Public Safety process. The CJC Budget HB 5005 was already scheduled in the Public Safety Committee on Feb 10 when The Justice Reinvestment Program was again supported by advocates and Community Corrections Directors.

Health Care in jail facilities throughout the state would be required in HB 2199 and 2201. Rep Marty Wilde brought these bills forward to require that the jail contact the health care provider within 24 hours of booking into a jail facility. If the jailed person is a Veteran, the jail is required to enroll him/her in the Veteran medical assistance program and/or transfer to a Veterans facility.

County Jail Commanders objected to the short timeline requirements as many persons are released within 72 hours. Medical providers require a release of information form and payments for medications are not within jail budgets. The author of the bills may consider amendments.

The Public Safety Ways and Means subcommittee considered the Department of Police Standards and Service Training Budget in HB 5031. The agency trains police, sheriff, corrections staff, emergency medical dispatch, polygraph testers, private investigators, national guards and fire service fighters. The Governor's Budget proposed cuts in police and corrections training classes. A Task Force on Police training and accountability was initiated in response to cases of violence.

## Housing (Debbie Aiona and Nancy Donovan)

The Legislature is considering several bills that would reduce barriers for people seeking stable housing. In many cases, history with the criminal justice system, a spotty credit history, or other factors, make it difficult, if not impossible, to secure a safe and stable place to call home.

Following are some of the bills under consideration by the Legislature that would pave the way for more people to find a place to live.

**On SB 278 – Rent Guarantee Fund.** This bill proposes to amend the Rent Guarantee Fund and help more tenants access rental housing. Once a person completes a Rent Well education class and identifies a landlord willing to rent to them, the landlord can register for a rent guarantee. If, at any time during the first year of tenancy, the renter is either evicted for cause, has debt or damages the rental unit, or leaves with unpaid debt, the landlord may make a claim for reimbursement from the fund with documentation.

In the original legislation, there was a \$5,000 lifetime limit per landlord to make a claim against the fund. Unfortunately, this has meant that landlords are hesitant to rent to more than one Rent Well graduate at a time. SB 278 would allow a \$5,000 per residential tenant limit and allow more tenants to access rental housing.

**HB 2427 – Universal Rental Application.** This bill seeks to reduce barriers to stable housing for low-income Oregonians by developing a universal application system to streamline the application process. The bill requires landlords to use the application and prohibits them from charging a screening fee greater than \$10. Oregon has some of the nation's highest rates of unsheltered homelessness, and extreme rates of cost-burdened households. Application and screening fees contribute to these problems.

**SB 291 – Landlords are to consider supplemental information in reviewing rental applications.** This bill will reduce disparities for people who have been involved in the criminal justice system. They may be screened out of housing by checking a box that shows they have a criminal history. This bill will improve the guidelines by which landlords may consider and assess an applicant's prior arrest and conviction history to ensure greater fairness in obtaining housing.

HB 2094 – Expand definition of “veteran” for the purpose of increasing access to Oregon housing programs: This bill would authorize Oregon Housing and Community Services to expand the definition of “veteran” to include those legally identified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as veterans. In Oregon, one out of 10 people experiencing homelessness is a veteran. Expanding the definition of “veteran” to include people discharged due to pregnancy or “Don't Ask, Don't Tell,” for example, will allow more veterans in need of assistance to access housing programs offered by OHCS.

HB 2163 – Rent Assistance Fund for Homeless Youth. This fund will provide long-term rent assistance for youth experiencing homelessness. The Governor's budget has proposed \$4.5 million for the program, and Oregon Housing and Community Services will administer it.

## Healthcare (Bill Walsh)

Snow days and No Power days slowed the legislative process this week. The Senate Health Care Committee (SHC) did not meet and moved their agendas into next week.

The House Health Care Committee (HHC) met on 2/18/2021 and held Public Hearings. Three bills, HB 2072, HB 2075, and HB 2074 increases agencies' ability to regulate by raising license fees. The Legislature requires these agencies to raise their own budgets through such provider fees. HB 2421 creates an Oregon Kidney Disease Prevention and Education Task Force. HB 2981 requires the Oregon Health Authority to establish and administer a program to provide palliative care services and support provisions of home- and community-based end of life care. The five bills above encountered little opposition, but HB 2541 has generated debate during two meetings between optometrists and ophthalmologists over surgical procedures. The bill was carried over to a meeting next week.

Public hearings on three related bills are scheduled for the 2/22/2021 SHC agenda: SCR 3, in memoriam of Rep. Mitch Greenlick; SJR 12, the HOPE amendment (\*language below) originally sponsored by Rep. Greenlick; and SB 428 that would extend the sunset of the Universal Health Care Task Force.

\*The proposed amendment to the Oregon Constitution reads, SECTION 47. (1) It is the obligation of the state to ensure that every resident of Oregon has access to cost-effective, clinically appropriate and affordable health care as a fundamental right.

(2) The obligation of the state described in subsection (1) of this section must be balanced against the public interest in funding public schools and other essential public services, and any remedy arising from an action brought against the state to enforce the provisions of this section may not interfere with the balance described in this subsection.

## Immigration, Refugee & Human Rights (Claudia Keith)

Priority Bills - May have testimony

Recently posted to OLIS:

[SB 778](#) Establishes Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement to implement and oversee statewide immigrant and refugee integration strategy. Directs Governor to appoint director of office. Appropriates funds to office. Declares emergency, effective on passage. (still awaiting committee assignment)

[SB 718](#) Appropriates moneys from General Fund to Department of Human Services to award grants to refugee resettlement agencies to provide specified services to refugees.

Following, no testimony planned at this time.

[SJM 1](#) Children's Institute: Urges Congress to enact legislation implementing internal Immigration and Customs Enforcement policy prohibiting enforcement actions in sensitive locations.

[SB 389](#) Dembrow, Fredrick, Gelser: Directs Oregon Department of Administrative Services to award grants to eligible agencies to provide immigration-related services and supports, and education and outreach, to immigrant communities. Requires agencies that receive grants to report to department. Requires department to annually report to interim committee of the Legislative Assembly related to immigration.

[SB 569](#) Gelser, Patterson: Makes unlawful employment practice for employer to require employee or prospective employee to possess or present valid driver's license as condition of employment or continuation of employment.

[HB 2161](#) Relating to a Racial Justice Council; Directs office of Governor to study laws related to economic opportunity and provide results of study to appropriate interim committees of Legislative Assembly ... cmt hrg 2/23.

[HB 2496](#) Exemption from non resident tuition fees for certain Pacific Islander students - likely to pass.

[HB 3041](#) Removes "gender identity" from definition of "sexual orientation" in ORS 174.100 and creates stand-alone definition of "gender identity" in ORS 174.100.

[SJM 4](#) Sen Fredrick: Urges Congress to enact legislation to begin process of implementing reparations for African Americans based on slavery and discrimination.

[SB 618](#) Sen Frederick Directs Oregon Department of Administrative Services to study methods of providing reparations for slavery to Black



Oregonians and report to appropriate committee or interim committee of Legislative Assembly no later than September 15, 2022.

[SB 0070](#) Oregon Health Authority: Defines "regional health equity coalition" and "regional health equity coalition model." Requires Oregon Health Authority to work with regional health equity coalitions and groups utilizing regional health equity coalition model throughout state.

Find these Bills in other Leg Reports:

Education: [HB 2697](#) and [HB 2937](#). League Testimony posted, Related to Hate and bias behavior and symbols in schools.

NR & CE [SB 289](#) directs office of Governor, in consultation with Racial Justice Council's Environmental Equity Committee, to study laws related to environment...

[SB 286](#) renames Environmental Justice Task Force as Environmental Justice Council. Establishes council within Department of Environmental Quality. Modifies membership and duties of council. Modifies definition of "natural resource agency." Directs council to develop cumulative impact analysis.

## Criminal Justice

[HB 2169](#) Relating to a Racial Justice Council.

## Housing and Homeless

[SB 291](#) Relating to a Racial Justice Council, directs office of the Governor, in consultation with Racial Justice Council's Housing and Homelessness Committee, to study laws related to housing and to provide results to interim committees of Legislative Assembly no later than September 15, 2022.