



DISABILITY RIGHTS OREGON

April 10, 2013

TO: Senator Chip Shields, Chair
Senate General Government, Consumer and Small Business Protection
Committee
FR: Bob Joondeph, Executive Director
RE: SB 747

Disability Rights Oregon (DRO) Rights Oregon supports SB 747.

As the federally-designated *Protection and Advocacy* agency for Oregon, DRO is mandated to protect and advocate for the rights of individuals with disabilities, including people with mental health and cognitive disabilities.

Sadly, Portland has become a city in which many of the people DRO serves believe that the police are not a group to look to for protection but, instead, to avoid out of fear. Individuals and groups who represent them have witnessed killings and use of excessive force by police on community members with little, if any, accountability.

The report of the US Department of Justice that led to a pending consent decree between Portland and USDOJ sets out, in detail, the incidents and deficiencies that have led to death and injury to individuals with mental illness and other disabilities. Despite the attention that these practices have attracted, officer accountability remains elusive.

Much needs to be done to change a police culture that dehumanizes some of our citizens and deploys tazers, firearms and other potentially lethal force without any appearance of accountability. SB 747 will help to address the very serious problem of a police force that vulnerable individuals view with fear rather than respect.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit evidence.