

HB 2661 Testimony to House Committee on Judiciary
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Chair Barker, Representatives Garrett, Krieger, Barton, Cameron, Hicks, Olson, Tomei, and Willamson:

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak before you. My name is Emma Covelli and I am with the Criminal Justice Policy Research Institute at Portland State University, which is the staffing entity for the Law Enforcement Contacts Policy and Data Review Committee, a Governor appointed commission.

My purpose in this testimony is to highlight the importance of our government and non-government agencies taking the time to analyze data on racial and ethnic disparities, such as those presented in House Bill 2661. It is only through this work that we can begin to understand what and where disparities exist, what various factors are causing disparities, and how these disparities can be resolved. We owe it to our community members, to our government workers, and those served by the criminal justice system to address any disparities with facts and professionalism. It is through this work that agencies have been able to address racial inequities and tensions within their organization and with those that they serve. It is through this work that agencies have been able to identify exactly where disparities exist in their operations and have the important follow up conversations within their organizations to identify and resolve the causes of those disparities. It is through this work that an Oregon police department was able to identify a spike in contacts with Asians, even after a high profile case involving an Asian suspect had been closed. Through this agency's work and because they monitored their stops data regularly, they were able to determine that the impact of a high profile case had unintentionally made some of their officers have a heightened suspicion of Asians after this event. Because they monitored their work, they were able to realize what had happened and resolve it. It is through this work that agencies can understand if they have worse retention rates among employees of color in their organization and if so why. It is through this work that agencies can accurately and intelligently communicate with the public regarding what, if any, disparities are occurring in the services they are providing.

The potential uses for this type of data analysis are vast and critical for:

- *ensuring* that our criminal justice system is operating from the highest amount of integrity and is seen as legitimate (for only then is it at its most effective)
- *providing* the information needed to our criminal justice agencies to resolve racial disparities if they have any
- *improving* recruiting and retention of employees of color in our criminal justice agencies
- *reducing* stress for both community members and employees of the criminal justice

The Criminal Justice Policy Research Institute is currently working in partnership with the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission to do a part of these analyses but not all of them. It is very important that we continue to build upon our current efforts. Former Oregon Supreme Court Chief Justice Paul DeMuniz is our Chair for this work and was unable to attend today; however, he is working towards securing state funding for this work. We have some recommended amendments for this bill in order to increase the effectiveness of this effort and we urge this committee to provide time for this bill to be refined and considered for approval.

Thank you for your time.

The LECC's main efforts focus on:

- **Providing training in partnership with DPSST to Oregon law enforcement**
 - Training focuses on racial/ethnic bias issues in policing, unconscious bias, race and the Oregon experience. Two curriculums are used a) Simon Wiesenthal's Museum of Tolerance: Perspectives on Profiling, b) Diversity and Profiling in Contemporary Policing (developed by Oregon trainers and CJPRI)
 - Over 1,400 participants from Oregon law enforcement agencies have attended our trainings since 2008. These trainings are received very positively by Oregon law enforcement and survey results indicate that this training is having an impact on how officers think about ethical and racial issues in their job.

- **Assisting agencies with stop data collection and analysis needs**
 - Since 2007, the LECC and CJPRI has worked closely with four law enforcement agencies: Portland Police Bureau, Hillsboro PD, Oregon State Police, and Corvallis PD.
 - The LECC has helped standardize the collection of traffic stop data points and benchmarking techniques in order to understand racial/ethnic disparities in Oregon.

- **Monitoring public perceptions of Oregon law enforcement**
 - Since 2007, two statewide surveys have been conducted, using stratified random sampling and two oversamples to capture the viewpoints among Hispanic, African American, and White Oregonians.
 - Although survey results indicate some improvement in general feelings towards Oregon police officers, approximately half of the White population and the majority of the African American and Hispanic populations express concerns that racial profiling is still occurring in Oregon.

- **Researching police and minority community relations**
 - In partnership with the Salem Police Department, a guidebook, *Decreasing Crime by Increasing Involvement: A Minority Community Relationship-building Guidebook for Law Enforcement* has been developed.