



February 2, 2016

Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

Basic Rights Oregon works to ensure that all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer Oregonians experience equality by building a broad and inclusive politically powerful movement, shifting public opinion and achieving policy victories. Through our transgender justice and racial justice programs, we seek to ensure that members of our community who experience multiple forms of discrimination and navigate multiple systems of inequity can change the policies that most impact their lives, so that we can all work to end homophobia, transphobia and racism. We know that our movement for equality is bigger than one vote, broader than one issue, and stronger than the fear and intolerance that we must overcome.

Law enforcement professionals should be a source of safety and protection. However, for many transgender and queer people of color, encounters with police officers bring immense fear. According to the National Transgender Discrimination Survey, nearly half of transgender people say they would feel somewhat or very uncomfortable seeking police assistance, while more than a third are uncomfortable seeking their help. Transgender people of color experience higher levels of discrimination and harassment from law enforcement. Thirty-eight percent of black transgender people report experiencing transphobic police harassment and 15 percent said they experienced assault by police. Nine percent of Latino transgender individuals also report assaults by police.

Oregon needs data collection and oversight, accountability, and culturally competent law enforcement to address the discrimination faced by community members. Accurate data will allow us to better understand the experiences our community members are facing. Greater accountability will make it so people don't have to live in fear and entire communities are not cast as suspect. Changing the culture to curb profiling will help create safer and more just communities.

We ask the legislature to pass HB 4003 and extend the work group so that they are able to strongly consider the experiences and stories of our community, and create and develop strong recommendations that will bring transparency, accountability and change for our community.

