



TO: Senate Committee on Judiciary
FROM: Chief Randy Sparacino
City of Medford Police Department
DATE: February 8, 2016
RE: Support for SB 1555

Thank you for your consideration of SB 1555 enhancing Oregon law enforcement's ability to protect our communities.

The Medford Police Department includes 103 police officers, 33 civilian employees and 30 volunteers. Our Department strives for an urban society, free from crime and disorder, consistent with the values of a free society. The Medford Police Department enforces the law in a fair and impartial manner, recognizing both the statutory and judicial limitations of police authority and the Constitutional Rights of all persons.

Every tool that law enforcement can use to ensure that they are hiring the best qualified and most stable candidates should be at our disposal. Currently, our pre-employment testing processes include background investigations, medical exams and psychological exams. Thorough candidate screening is imperative as the first line of defense in assuring care of the public, preventing civil liability and mitigating risk. Polygraph tests will be a valuable addition.

This is not an issue of making hiring easier for law enforcement; it is a matter of making the public safer. Recent national news has made it clear that while many people aim to serve as officers, not all have the judgment and temperament to do so. While no test can make guarantees, the ability to ask questions developed by professionals that can relay concerning past behaviors and indicate disturbing current beliefs is something of which we must take advantage.

The exams we are currently allowed to use limit our ability to see what a prospective officer does not want us to see. Deception on a questionnaire is difficult to determine, and while lies about previous behaviors are incredibly telling about one's character, a polygraph machine can also measure the body's natural fight, flight or freeze responses to stressful situations.

Now more than ever the public is demanding we choose officers of the highest caliber. Please provide us with the option to use this important tool so that we may do so.