

March 6, 2017

Chair Barker, and members of the Committees,

For the record, my name is Courtney Robertstad. I've lived in Portland for over 20 years. I'm a computer systems engineer, and a proud mother of three. I'm active in the community, and I've volunteered in several capacities for churches, food pantries, and in advocacy helping houseless folks. I'm here to share my experience with profiling, and to ask you to support Senate Bill 560.

About three years ago, I was riding my bike along the Waterfront and saw someone I knew from the social justice community. I decided to say hello, and sat down on the grass. Immediately after we sat down, two officers on bicycles rolled up and greeted my friend by name. They said, "you've clearly been drinking today," to which he replied, "yes, I have." As they were writing him a citation, they started asking me for my ID. I asked why, and they accused me of drinking, too.

I had a bottle of Arizona Iced Tea with me, and asked them to smell it to confirm that there was no alcohol, just tea. They both agreed that there was alcohol in the bottle, and so I asked them for a breath test. They laughed and told me that they "didn't do those," and proceeded to write me a ticket.

I went to a friend's house, outraged, and had her smell the bottle, too. I decided to go to the police station to see if I could get some help, or get a breath test to confirm that I wasn't drinking. I was told that there were no officers in Central Precinct, only clerks. I asked if they could call a supervisor, and I was told that they were all out on calls, couldn't come in, and couldn't do breath tests anyhow. As I was waiting outside, I saw a few officers walk in and out. I

asked them what they might do in the same situation, and one told me that the key was that they didn't pour out the bottle, which they do if there's alcohol. The second officer I talked to was the chief of police, who told me I needed to go to court and take my chances with a judge. I was told that it was two officers' word versus mine, and that a Breathalyzer wasn't available.

In going to court, I learned that I wasn't entitled to an attorney because the ticket was less than an offense. I was required to do 8 hours of community service and to have it expunged at my own expense, or pay an enormous fine, or plead not guilty. They told me that if I went to a trial, I wasn't entitled to an attorney, to a jury, or to anything but a trial by judge. I went in to enter a plea in my case, and one of the officers pulled me aside. He said, "let's make a deal. You were obviously drinking. Just plead guilty and we can work it out." I respectfully rejected his offer: I hadn't been drinking, and I wasn't about to plead guilty to a crime I didn't commit.

After going through the judicial process, my case was dismissed by the District Attorney's office after all. But, nobody should have to face what I did, or endure the months of grief and aggravation. Please support to End Profiling Act to give our communities the tools to hold police accountable. Low-income neighborhoods, communities of color, and LGBT people are targeted the most. HB2355 will restore freedom and open up economic opportunity. Changing the culture to curb profiling helps create safer and more just communities.

Sincerely,
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