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Re: House Bill 2355

Testimony of Kayse Jama, Executive Director, Unite Oregon

Good Afternoon, Chair Barker and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Kayse Jama, and I am the Executive Director of Unite Oregon. I was a member of the work group of law enforcement representatives, lawyers, and community members that worked together to put this bill before you.

Profiling is a national problem and Oregon is no different. It produces life-altering consequences for the people experiencing it. In addition, profiling does nothing to promote safe communities, as it has the result of creating mistrust between law enforcement and the people they serve. Unite Oregon and our coalition partners have been working on this issue for many years, and it's time for significant action.

As you know, the Law Enforcement Profiling Work Group has been meeting over the past 18 months. From my perspective, we have done a tremendous job and accomplished a great deal together.

I want to thank our Attorney General, Ellen Rosenbaum, who provided outstanding leadership and helped us to facilitate some very difficult conversations.

I also want to thank Aaron Knott from the AG's office, who offered us his support and technical expertise during the process.

Perhaps most importantly, I want to thank the members of the law enforcement community who were willing to come to the table in good faith. We came to this work from different perspectives and with very diverse experiences. We listened to one another. Sometimes we disagreed, but we always sought to find common ground and reach consensus.

This bill that is in front of you is a big move forward in our state's effort to end profiling. It requires statewide data collection on vehicle and officer-initiated pedestrian stops, which is the first step in understanding the depth and breadth of the problem in Oregon. It also establishes statewide training for law enforcement agencies on implicit bias and cultural competency, ensuring that officers receive the support they need. Lastly, the bill reforms sentencing for drug offences that have disparately impacted people of color and low-income Oregonians—treating addiction as a health crisis, not a law-enforcement action.

Unite Oregon and our coalition partners support this bill and urge the committee to move it forward. Of course, this is not the end of our work together. We're addressing deeply-rooted American issues that are not likely to be completely solved today. However, we stand ready to continue the relationships we've built and work collaborative for a fair and just state.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kayse Jama". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in the bottom left corner of the page.