

Hello,

My name is Vessela Yordanova and I'm a resident of Portland, Oregon. I am writing to provide written testimony ahead of the Joint Interim Committee on the First Special Session of 2020. Specifically, I would like to voice my support for the following bill proposals that will be discussed relating to police reform:

1. **Make it harder for arbitrators to overturn law enforcement discipline.** The fact that arbitration can expunge the record or erase the wrongdoing of an officer altogether is heinous and proliferates the continued abuse of power and police brutality that we must abolish. Officers must be held accountable.
2. **Require law enforcement officers to intervene and report when colleagues use unreasonable/excessive force.** There needs to be accountability embedded within the Police Dept itself, and for bad actors to be identified and reported by their peers. Currently, awful and criminal behavior is supported by the gang mentality and loyalty all police officers are indoctrinated into. This must be stopped.
3. **Prohibit law enforcement agencies from using tear gas, long range acoustic devices or sound cannons, and rubber bullets.** These "non-lethal" weapons are anything but non-lethal. They are banned in warfare, and should be banned from being used against the citizens that the police are PAID to protect and serve.
4. **Ban law enforcement from using holds that inhibit a person's ability to breathe, including but not limited to choke holds.** This definition is too broad in my mind and would allow officers to use different but still lethal detaining tactics that restrict blood flow and can cause pulmonary shock or cardiac arrest. This definition needs to be expanded to cover more types of detaining holds.
5. **Put the Oregon Attorney general in charge of investigating cases of deadly use of force, and force that causes serious injuries by law enforcement.** This is a good first step, but there should be an appointed third-party outside of the State Justice Department who can ensure officers are investigated without partiality and bias.
6. **Create a statewide database of law enforcement officer discipline and publish the information online publically.** This is a key part of maintaining accountability and ensuring repeat behaviors are documented and result in disciplinary action. **I think this measure should be extended to include public complaints.**

All of these proposals should be unanimously passed as they are mandatory reforms to begin the process of ensuring the safety of Black, Indigenous, and all People of Color. Beyond these reforms, the state should continue to defund Police Departments and redistribute those funds to unarmed first responder units that specialize in Mental Health and Houselessness assistance. Oregon is a state founded on the oppression, subjugation, and discrimination of Black People, and has a history that it can never escape. This is just a small, minute step in the right direction. I implore the committee to pass these proposals.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Vessela Yordanova