



June 23, 2020

Co-Chairs Senator and Senate President Peter Courtney, and Representative and House Speaker Tina Kotek; co-Vice Chairs Senator Fred Girod and Representative Christine Drazen; and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) of OR, we respectfully request your support for Legislative Concept 79.

Systemic racism is firmly rooted in the U.S. and today's injustices mirror our shameful history. There can be no justice or equality when black, indigenous and people of color are seen as less deserving of basic human and civil rights.

It is unfortunate that we find ourselves at a point where the use of physical force resulting in death or serious injury is no longer suitable for investigation at the local level. But that is where we are.

This need has been shown, for example, in the request of 18 state Attorneys General to grant them the authority to investigate patterns of police misconduct rather than investigate them at the local level.¹ This letter was signed by Oregon Attorney General Ellen F. Rosenblum.

It is more than unfortunate that a significant proportion of our population no longer trusts that effective investigation of police misconduct will take place. This mistrust "threatens the legitimacy of law enforcement."²

In my personal experience as a federal prosecutor and criminal defense attorney, I often encountered police officers who understood only too well how things "really" worked -- and that there was often a huge difference between what is said, i.e. the rules, and what actually takes place, i.e. the final outcome. Police officers need to know that if they don't follow the rules by committing misconduct, then their misconduct will be fully and fairly investigated.

The officers who do follow the rules, even when they risk their own personal safety, also need to know that their partners are doing the same.

Respectfully submitted,

Trish Garner
State Public Policy Chair, AAUW of OR
Member, National AAUW Public Policy Committee
503-407-2341
garner37@mac.com

¹ <https://www.politico.com/f/?id=00000172-808d-d3d2-ab7a-b78d69050000>, Letter to Legislative Leaders from 18 State Attorneys General.

² See above.