

To whom it may concern,

I write today in support of the proposed police reforms presented by the POC caucus of the legislature. Although Senator Frederick and I have disagreed on matters of electoral reform, we are in lockstep on the need for police reform.

I would like to add some comments about a ban on area of effect weapons to disperse crowds. As a gun owner I am keenly aware that the police are misusing these crowd dispersal munitions. Tear gas canisters and rubber bullets were never meant to be fired directly at protesters, and yet we have seen the Portland Police Bureau do this over and over again over the last several years. I would like to believe that this is a training issue, but my fear is that these are deliberate acts intended to maim or possibly kill demonstrators.

Furthermore, even if we agree that the use of such munitions is necessary in order to defend life and property, attacks on the media, on medics, and on legal Observers, are NEVER warranted. The purpose of such attacks can never be to achieve crowd control or peace. It can only be to intimidate and silence critics. In order to defend the First Amendment rights of demonstrators and of the press, the legislature must act to curtail abuses of the police power.

Sincerely,
Michael Smith
Member, Gun Owners Caucus, DPO
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