

## FROM THE DESK OF SAL PERALTA

Chair Kotek and members of the Committee,

Thank you for your service to Oregon and for hosting these important hearings.

My name is Sal Peralta. I am a city council member in McMinnville and one of a handful of persons of color to serve in elected office in this state. I would like to offer my support as an ally to #blacklivesmatter activists in achieving greater racial justice in Oregon. I believe their efforts will benefit other marginalized communities in our state.

First, I would like to lend my full support for LC 49. I believe that the single most important thing you can do in this special session to ensure racial justice in policing and safer community policing overall, is to allow Oregon police departments to get rid of officers involved in inappropriate use of force cases.

I can find no instance in Oregon where an officer fired for inappropriate use of force has not had that determination overturned in arbitration. Such an outcome occurred in the City of McMinnville, which paid out more than \$400,000 to settle a claim that received national attention 8 years ago.

Though I agree with those who would like to see LC 49 go further, I believe it is critical that you pass this bill with broad support now, and use the momentum to strengthen it later rather than make last-minute changes in this short session. This will set a strong foundation for long-term collaboration on other needed reforms.

In future sessions, I believe that lawmakers should also look at the accreditation standards for police officers and how those are applied in Oregon. With or without legislation, standards could be applied to make it harder for officers with discipline-related issues to move from agency-to-agency without substantial re-education and additional certification.

**Beyond that, I would like to call your committee's attention to critical issues that I believe are not being adequately addressed in this special session.**

Earlier this month, several county sheriffs and other local elected officials in southern Oregon helped to promulgate an armed vigilante response to a militia-inspired hoax that Antifa was sending people to infiltrate and to attack rural communities.

In Coquille, purportedly at the urging of the Coos County Sheriff, one or more members of the Coos County Board of Commissioners and one or more members of Coquille City Government, more than 200 vigilantes took to the streets to "fight off Antifa".

This was a hoax, but a concerning one. The conduct of these and other public officials and government employees, including an officer in the Oregon National Guard, put Oregon communities at risk.

It revealed substantial ties between these officials and extremist militias, a shocking lack of media literacy, and very likely a strong bias that may affect both policing and the general treatment of persons of color or anyone else who looks like "they don't belong" in some parts of our state.

These are not alarmist concerns. On the same night that armed vigilantes gathered in Coquille, in eastern Washington, a bi-racial family was menaced by 4-8 truckloads of armed men who chased them at highway speeds and cut down trees in their campsite to prevent them from leaving.

## **FROM THE DESK OF SAL PERALTA**

Local residents in communities around are state are afraid to step forward and say anything for fear of retaliation. This demands a response from Oregon elected officials.

I have asked the Oregon Department of Justice and the Governor to open an investigation into the conduct of these local officials. I have not received a response or acknowledgement of receipt. I would ask legislative policymakers to use your influence to encourage those investigations.

In addition, I would like to encourage the legislature to take two actions:

- 1) Set up a civil rights commission to examine racist and extremist attitudes among police and county sheriffs in the state of Oregon. There does not appear to be any state commission tasked with that role related to law enforcement. Civil rights generally appears to fall under BOLI and is targeted at employment-related claims.
- 2) Lawmakers should allocate specific funding for the Oregon Department of Justice to investigate extremism in county and local law enforcement as it relates to the militia movement and/or attitudes of the police towards the press.

Thank you for your attention to these concerns.

Sincerely,

Sal Peralta  
McMinnville City Council