

Hello,

My name is Krysti Slonaker and I am a wellness professional living in clackamas county. I must preface this testimony by stating that I come from a long line of police and corrections family. My best friend is retired military police. My father in law was a sherriff deputy here in Oregon. I often side with the side of the law.

All of that being said, I agree that changes need to be made in the police departments. Is "defunding" the answer? I don't think in such few words. But I do believe that some funds could be reallocated for regular police mental health/psychological screenings. This would help to identify early symptoms of burn-out, fatigue, and potential aggression building up. This should also include regular conversations with significant others, because they often see more than the officer is willing to share. These screenings could help to prevent excessive responses while on duty because officers will have a space to get the emotions out, rather than rely on "manning up", and experiencing an excess of "fight" hormones in the moment.

I also suggest as a partial solution less work hours for patrol and responding officers. By limiting the hours worked in the field in a day to 6 (rather than 8-12) we can reduce the amount of emotional and physical stress and fatigue that can create poorer decision making toward the end of the day. Exhaustion reduces the brain's ability to respond to situations, and we find ourselves reacting instead of responding. This removes logical thought processes, and often the reaction is over the top and uncalled for. How many fights between spouses happen when the couple is running on no sleep and stress with a newborn? Many more than prior to the baby. How many arguments happen as a result of one partner having a particular stressful day at work, and they misinterpret their partner? I know for me this is the only time my husband and I argue. One of us come home with a short fuse.

The mental health of our nation is in desperate need of attention. And police and emergency responders are not exempt from this issue. They are often exacerbated by seeing so much of the "bad" side of people. By reducing field hours and increasing mental health support, I believe we will begin to see more of the good side of our police force that I know exists because of my experience from my family, friends, and the few videos of officers joining community events.

Thank you for your time.
Krysti Slonaker.