

June 23, 2020

Senate President Courtney and Speaker of the House Kotek, Co-Chairs Joint Interim Committee On The First Special Session of 2020
900 Court Se. NE
Salem, OR 97301

I write as a member of the NATIONAL ALLIANCE ON MENTAL ILLNESS of Southern Oregon. I am mother of two young adult sons with mental illness. Both of my sons have experienced multiple police contacts, arrests, and brief periods in jail as a direct result of their mental illnesses. One of my sons is a person of color.

While my family's experience of our local police has been mostly positive, I strongly favor the six legislative concepts on police accountability now before you. I urge you and the whole legislature to write effective bills from these concepts that will leave no loopholes for police officers or police agencies to get away with harming, killing or discriminating against people of color.

I am also aware that the six legislative concepts, while vital to public safety, are not enough. Here are a few concepts that must also be included in real transformation:

1. End the qualified immunity doctrine for police in cases involving mental illness as well as racial discrimination.
2. Require video recorders for all policing.
3. Include all police officer communications (texts, WhatsApp, messenger) as part of standard discover with Attorney General's office.
4. Require de-escalation training not warrior training for police.
5. Establish non-police interventions to crises involving homelessness, intoxication, disorientation, substance abuse, and mental health, similar to the Cahoots (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets) program in Eugene. <https://whitebirdclinic.org/services/cahoots/>
6. Ensure that the role of mental illness in fatal police shootings is identified and reported in government data collection.
7. Make investigations of police behavior transparent to the public.
8. Require robust data collection on police-community encounters, including use of force, as it prohibits racial profiling and mental illness.

Finally, I urge you to consider the impact of mental illness on law enforcement interactions with our communities. This is not a small impact:

Mental Health by the Numbers

- 19.1% of U.S. adults experienced mental illness in 2018 (47.6 million people). This represents 1 in 5 adults.
- 4.6% of U.S. adults experienced serious mental illness in 2018 (11.4 million people). This represents 1 in 25 adults.
- 16.5% of U.S. youth aged 6-17 experienced a mental health disorder in 2016 (7.7 million people)
- 3.7% of U.S. adults experienced a co-occurring substance use disorder and mental illness in 2018 (9.2 million people)
- Annual prevalence of mental illness among U.S. adults, by demographic group:
 - o Non-Hispanic Asian: 14.7%

- o Non-Hispanic white: 20.4%
- o Non-Hispanic black or African-American: 16.2%
- o Non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native: 22.1%
- o Non-Hispanic mixed/multiracial: 26.8%
- o Hispanic or Latino: 16.9%
- o Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual: 37.4%

Law Enforcement Involvement

- 20.1% of people experiencing homelessness in the U.S. have a serious mental health condition
- 37% of adults incarcerated in the state and federal prison system have a diagnosed mental illness
- 70.4% of youth in the juvenile justice system have a diagnosed mental illness

From NAMI website: <https://www.nami.org/mhstats>

The proposals before you are an important step toward a more equitable system of policing, but they are not by themselves an adequate answer. Please commit yourselves to both immediate actions in this special session as well as a process of developing long-range systems of social justice with community organizations led by and representing Black, Indigenous, People of Color and mental health advocates. We need the significant strengthening of the existing LCs as well as the addition of a number of important measures that have not yet introduced.

Sincerely,
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