

To the OR Legislature Joint Committee on Transparent Policing and Use of Force Reform,

I am a supporter of the Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility organization and their stance on HB 4208 (use of tear gas):

- Tear gas has been banned for warfare since 1925. Still, CS gas (*o*-Chlorobenzylidene malononitrile) remains one of the most extensively used “riot control” agents. It has transient as well as lasting, severe, and sometimes life-threatening effects on skin, respiratory systems, and eyes. Police, demonstrators, bystanders, and secondarily-exposed health care workers have been [harmed by exposure to CS](#).
- One in ten people in Oregon has asthma, with disproportionate rates among Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Using tear gas arbitrarily puts BIPOC and others with varying levels of health or vulnerability, such as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), at risk of serious life-threatening illness.
- During a pandemic of respiratory disease, it is excessively reckless to expose people in a crowd to lung irritants.
- The riot exemption must be removed, as we have already seen police in Oregon abusing this exemption to deploy tear gas on protesters.
- We also urge to not just stop here, but to listen to the voices of Black community leaders to fundamentally transform our systems of public safety.

Thanks for your consideration.

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