



A STRONG VOICE FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

TO: Chairs Manning and Bynum
Members of the Joint Committee

FR: Cassie Purdy, Campaign Organizer, Oregon AFL-CIO

RE: Joint Committee on Transparent Policing and Use of Force

July 15, 2020

The Oregon AFL-CIO represents over 400 local unions and more than 300,000 workers across the state and is a voice for all workers in the legislative process. We know that Black workers, Indigenous workers, and workers of color are most impacted by systems of inequality on and off the job site. We're joining our partners at Unite Oregon and other Black led and serving organizations, calling for change in our state's policing system. Oregon's Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities are calling for immediate shifts in policing policy. While we demand swift and bold action, we are also asking that the legislature oversees a process that meaningfully engages the constituents demanding justice.

As previously requested, we continue to call for the establishment and funding of a community-led effort to reimagine safety and resilience. This funding should include grounding and resourcing the effort in Black-led and Black-serving organizations and advocates, including leaders from transgender and houseless communities. These communities have identified a need for the time and resources to produce a community-driven long-term plan and subsequent policy, practice, and resource proposals for decision-makers to engage with.

Additionally, the Oregon AFL-CIO supports calls to address qualified immunity in the next special session. **Officers should not be allowed to shield themselves with the doctrine of qualified immunity which has served to protect officers from accountability and deny families justice.** Oregon should move to address qualified immunity by allowing victims of police misconduct to enforce their civil rights and bring a lawsuit against officers who must be held accountable.

Additionally, the legislature should work to strengthen and improve policies passed in the last special session:

- **Serious loopholes exist in HB 4203 and should be remedied in the next special session.** The language of the bill only prohibits force that restricts a person's breathing or circulation if the officer does so *knowingly*. The bill also allows for the continued training of officers on physical force that can restrict breathing as a "defensive maneuver". These loopholes allow not only the training of but the continued use of chokeholds, and law enforcement can simply declare they were acting in self-defense or they didn't know they were restricting breathing in order to avoid discipline.
- **We implore the legislature to outright ban the use of tear gas in Oregon.** Furthermore, the legislature should take further action to immediately prohibit the use of all indiscriminate weapons and provide enough flexibility to capture weapons that we know of today, like tear gas and flash bangs, and future indiscriminate weapons that we do not know of yet.

- While we uphold that all workers have the right to collectively bargain and access to due process, this process should never shield officers from accountability or scrutiny when harm is done to the community.

Beyond these concepts, **we encourage the legislature to look at how we can move to shrink the size and functions of policing in Oregon and reimagine what safety looks like in our communities.** The Oregon AFL-CIO asks the legislature to take action now to invest in the health, safety, and prosperity of our communities.