



July 17, 2020

Co-chairs Senator Manning and Representative Bynum and members of the committee,

My name is Tony Lapiz, I am the political and policy strategist for SEIU, focusing on racial and economic justice. SEIU represents more than 85,000 working Oregonians, including many who identify as Black, Indigenous and People of Color. We are committed to being an anti-racist organization and fighting for racial and economic justice. We know that until Black communities and other communities of color can thrive, none of our communities can truly thrive. We appreciate this committee recognizing the immediate need to address the harm, violence and systemic racism facing Black Oregonians and people of color. We especially want to thank the Legislature’s People of Color Caucus for bringing forward policy proposals and continuing to lead on racial justice.

Issues of racial justice need to be at the forefront of all of our fights, and while urgent action is needed, we appreciate you taking the time to continue reviewing and strengthening policies to make our state more just.

As previously requested, we continue to call for the establishment funding of a community-led effort to reimagine safety and resilience. This 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 legislature should work to strengthen and improve policies past in the last special session:

- **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, a weapon of war, 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.

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.**

As a Union we stand firmly alongside Oregon's Black led community organizations who are urgently advancing solutions for change. In particular we want to elevate advocacy provided by Unite Oregon, PAALF Action Fund, the Urban League of Portland, Rose City Justice, and many more who are leading on this work on every front.

Like many Oregonians, SEIU members have been greatly impacted by three pressing, simultaneous crises: the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic crisis, and the epidemic of continuous violence against Black people and other communities of color. At this critical moment, SEIU is calling for a reckoning on our economy and democracy to disrupt centuries of racism, and we look forward to continued work over the coming months and years.

Thank you for your time today, and for considering these pieces of legislation.

Tony Lapid, MPH
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