

I hope that I will get a chance to provide my testimony tomorrow verbally, but in case I am not, I want to provide my written testimony in regards to the hearing about House Bill 4208.

My name is Samuel Fout. I live in Southwest Portland, and work in East Portland for Parkrose School District as a teacher. I am a constituent of Representative Rob Nosse and of Senator Kathleen Taylor

I have not been to nearly as many of the George Floyd protests as I would have liked. I have probably been to about 5 total since the start of June, including the very first one which started with a vigil at Peninsula park and ended with police teargassing the area in front of the justice center. Occasionally this is due to laziness, but mostly it is due to fear, not just of the pandemic, but of the brutality I have seen from police for over a decade.

The police cannot be trusted to self-regulate their own use of CS gas. It must be forcibly taken from them through defunding and direct action by you, our legislators.

There is no situation in which tear gas can have justified use. It is not permitted in war, and it should not be permitted in Oregon, let alone anywhere else.

When tear gas is deployed in neighborhoods, it causes toxicity that lingers for days and requires food to be thrown out because it cannot be safely eaten. It causes a seizing up of lungs that can damage even a healthy person's breathing permanently, and we are in a pandemic that primarily spreads through respiratory systems, causing massive lung failure in extreme cases.

I used to live kitty-corner to Terry Shrunken Plaza, about 6 years ago. If I lived there now, I would seek alternative shelter, because often times the level of smoke in downtown portland is so noxious it is difficult to be within even a block of it. Downtown may not be strictly residential, but the building I lived in is still there, and there are numerous apartments and hotels in the area.

I have never felt unsafe because of protestors. I have never seen a protestor do anything that would warrant a violent response. Yes, I have seen protestors throw water bottles, at fully armored riot police. Never at civilians. The damage caused by protestors through small fires and graffiti is vastly outweighed by the damage caused by police who use literal chemical warfare on the populace they are sworn to protect.

It is no coincidence that the two locations police have used tear gas are outside the Justice Center (where the PPB offices are located) and the Portland Police Association (union) building. They are defending a building with violent retribution.

It is well documented, by the numerous journalists (Alex Zielenski, Cory Elia, Tuck Woodstock, and many more) at the scenes of these incidents, that police can and do declare riots even when the protestors have done nothing but protest. They have repeatedly lied about objects that have supposedly been thrown their way, or about the nature of the damage.

In a recent example, police used a broken window on their association building, not even a government building, to justify violently pushing protestors back with batons and eventually pepper bullets and smoke (non-cs thankfully). The cause of the broken window was an officer who violently knocked a protestor's phone out of their hand, behind them into the building.

The mayor, and police commissioner, of Portland refuses to take action to restrain the police who are brutalizing us. Our city council has been inactive on this. The federal government clearly has no intention of taking action. It is now on you, our state government, to take action.

1) Ban CS gas and all other chemical irritants for any reason. No more language around "In case of riot". The police can, have, and will lie to get around any such rules. CS Gas is neither necessary nor helpful.

2) Forcibly defund the Portland Police through your budgeting powers. It may not be able to be done through traditional means but these are not normal times. We have not been count on those who have been sworn to protect us. That is now up to you.

Thank you for your time.

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