

Dear Committee Members,

I chose to become a family physician in order to seek individual and collective health and justice for my patients and community. For this reason, I am writing today to urge you to declare your support for HB4208 and ban future police use of tear gas against Portlanders, and to plead with you to push further legislation to cease the onslaught of police brutality currently plaguing our community.

The use of tear gas is always reprehensible, but in this historic moment in which we find ourselves engulfed by an unprecedented global pandemic and in the midst of a national and international uprising against racism and the very police brutality we see terrorizing our community on a nightly basis, I write to sound the alarm regarding this particularly dangerous, unnecessary and unwarranted threat to public health.

Current city and state measures designed to contain the pandemic are directly threatened by the use of these weapons that provoke coughing and respiratory distress, both of which can aerosolize infectious COVID19 virus particles and thereby spread infection. Its use also risks provoking life-threatening respiratory distress in individuals with underlying lung conditions at a time when medical respiratory supplies are of critical importance and shortage. If for no other reason than this, it is imperative that you all vote in support HB4208 today.

However, the use of tear gas was unjust well before COVID19. No matter the stated intentions of those using it, current use by PPB and federal officers to disperse Black Lives Matter protests has shown it is a weapon of white supremacy to silence the voices of Portlanders demanding the changes we need to protect our own lives and the lives of BIPOC community members we love. This is not peacekeeping. It's war-making by those sworn to "serve and protect" against unarmed protesters exercising their first amendment rights in the name of justice. There is no place for these tactics in our streets.

My colleagues and I have seen multiple patients in our clinics and emergency rooms with injuries stemming from violent, disproportionate, inappropriate use of tear gas. Community members have lost vision, sustained brain damage, required facial reconstructive surgery, and are losing any semblance of trust or expectation of protection they may have once had in our elected leaders and laws. It is heartbreaking and unjustifiable. And again, I cannot state more emphatically how the continued use of tear gas only continues to exacerbate the mounting stress on local healthcare systems already in the midst of an unparalleled pandemic.

Committee Members, I implore you to support HB4208 today and ban the continued use of tear gas as a weapon to quiet the bold, brave voices of Portlanders willing to stand up for justice and against oppression and brutality. I am part of that fight, and it is my hope that you are as well. Please show us your commitment by voting for HB4208.

Respectfully,

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