



## Carlton Police Department

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### MEMORANDUM

**To: Members of the Joint Committee on Transparent Policing  
and Use of Force Reform**

**From: Kevin Martinez, Chief of Police Carlton Oregon**

**Subject: Police Officer Uniforms and Identification**

**Date: July 28, 2020**

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Good Morning Co-Chairs Bynum and Manning and Members of the Committee, for the record, my name is Kevin Martinez. I am the Chief of Police for the City of Carlton and it is my pleasure today to provide testimony regarding **Legislative Concept 743** and its impact on a small law enforcement agency.

I have been a police officer for over 30 years in Oregon and have observed law enforcement agencies in Oregon progressively become more transparent and accountable to their communities as well as their representation of law enforcement across Oregon. Oregon's law enforcement should be recognized for its continued pursuit of the highest standards, ethics, professionalism and accountability. There is no doubt that we still have work to do.

Our agency is 1 of 66 law enforcement agencies in Oregon with fewer than 10 sworn officers. As a smaller agency, we often struggle to meet the basic policing needs of our communities due to small budgets, staffing and legislation that that creates a financial impact or administrative burden, all of which can prove to be challenging and impactful to the agency and the community as a whole.

When I came to Carlton in 2012, a community of approximately 2300 citizens and a 3 FTE police officer department, I found that the department was lacking a solid foundation that was

truly representative of what a law enforcement agency should be. I knew that an accredited agency promoted high standards in accountability, transparency, ethics and respect for all laws, policies and constitutional rights of the citizens we serve.

Accreditation provides internal as well as external reviews of existing policies and procedures to ensure we are meeting and/or exceeding industry standards of a professional and accountable law enforcement agency.

We became an accredited agency in 2014, which is not easy task especially for a small agency and have remained an accredited agency since.

One of our primary objectives was to establish a department that was easily identifiable by uniform and vehicle that was in line with our community values and makeup. A blend of a community and their local law enforcement generally results in a uniform that is representative of their partnership. One type of uniform would make it more difficult to identify a law enforcement officer or their agency.

As a small agency we will be subject to a financial hardship if we were required to change uniforms and it will take away our community identity as to how our citizens currently know their “community care takers.” Our motto is “Community & Police Together”, our community policing strategies and relationships are based on this. Changing uniforms would be a substantial cost that would take away from other critically necessary supplies, operational and training needs.

I agree that officers should have identification that is visible although the requirements outlined in the draft legislation are not practical or even possible in some cases. With regards to nametags I would respectfully submit that a name tag with a minimum of first initial and full last name be placed on all exterior clothing including traffic vests, unless the officer is in a plain clothes or undercover assignment. Excessive items placed on an officer’s uniform again could actually lead to confusion and a citizen’s inability to retain information. With a bold name tag that displays the officer’s first initial and last name and a shoulder patch that displays the agency name will likely not lead to confusion when it comes to identifying an officer or agency.

In a small agency Tactical/Load-bearing vests can be critically important. Often there are times an officer in small agencies work by themselves and may not have the ability to obtain necessary equipment that is not on their person and readily available. These vests are also designed to reduce officer injury, a common problem caused by traditional duty belts.

We as a small agency often utilize an unmarked vehicle to conduct surveillance, monitor traffic in problematic areas, and patrol the city. For a small city to have this tool has proven to be very affective in addressing various problematic issues. This in no way takes away from our primary patrol efforts with our highly visible mark vehicles.

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Law enforcement officers place their lives on the line everyday they go to work and deal with the stressors associated with escalated and/or critical incidents. Although I agree with officers needing to identify themselves, I believe that failing to do so should be addressed through internal agency discipline and not criminally. It is the responsibility and obligation of an agency to address these types of issues and hold accountable staff that fail to comply with directives, policies and procedures through documented progressive discipline which could ultimately result in an employee's termination for repeated violations.

It is with passion and commitment that we continue our collective efforts to create strong relationships with all of our citizens with the end result being a safer and more livable community.

I would like to thank Co-Chairs, Bynum and Manning and the committee for allowing me this time to talk with you.