

Greetings respected Chair and Committee members,

My name is Ryan Pederson and I am a resident of Jackson County. Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. I am here to ask you to ban law enforcement from being members of hate groups or engaging in hate speech as part of LC 744.

Currently, the moral code of conduct for Oregon Police Officers does not prohibit hate speech or membership in hate groups. Yet it is the solemn duty of law enforcement to enforce the laws equally and without bias. A person who is a member of a hate group or who engages in a pattern of hate speech clearly shows their bias - and that bias is a barrier to equal justice for every Oregonian.

I do not mean to suggest that most, or even many, officers hold biases that drive unequal treatment. I believe that most law enforcement truly want to protect and serve their communities. However, I ask that you recognize and address the threat that even a few biased officers pose to public safety.

It is an ongoing goal of Oregon law enforcement to improve public safety for all Oregonians and it is in the interest of public safety to treat all people equally and without prejudice. "Hate groups" exist for the purpose of hate and prejudice, and "hate speech" demonstrates such bias and malicious intent that it is one of only two legal exceptions to the 1st Amendment's right to free speech. That kind of bias and prejudice threatens public safety, rather than improves it. So these changes align with the stated goals of law enforcement agencies of Oregon, and would improve public safety for everyone.

To accomplish this ban, I ask that you recommend changes to Oregon Administrative Rule 259-008-0300, "Grounds for Denial, Revocation or Emergency Suspension of Public Safety Professional Certifications", under Section (2) "Mandatory Denial or Revocation of a Public Safety Professionals Certifications" if either "The public safety officer is found to be a member of a group designated by the State of Oregon and/or the federal government as a hate group." or "The public safety officer engages in a pattern of hate speech." The hate group portion of the rule has already been presented to the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training as an information item and is being routed through their subcommittees according to the standard rulemaking process. I ask that you encourage this process to fruition, and include the hate speech clause in your recommended changes as well.

The legal definition of a "hate group" would still need to be defined by the legislature, but I have sent draft legislation to Senator Jeff Golden's office to define a hate group, and would be happy to distribute it to the Committee if requested. The draft definition reads: a "Hate group" means any formal or informal group of which members can be positively identified and which promotes, encourages, or advocates for violence or hate crimes against any other group or whose digital or printed materials, created or distributed, can be regularly or frequently characterized as hate speech.

Justice must be fair and equal, and now is the time to make these changes. I understand that this Committee exists for that purpose. Please support these changes, because hate has no place in justice. Thank you for your time.