

Thank you for the chance to address the issues that are affecting all of us these days, but most notably our friends in black communities.

First, I want to ask you all what is the goal of these bills that are being put forward? Are they simply trying to meet the demands of the protestors, or are you truly wanting to affect change in the way law enforcement is handled? Second, I would like to voice my support for the bills LC-742 to LC-748. I feel they are a great step forward for our state. In that spirit, I would like to suggest some additional steps that will improve on these bills in achieving a better, higher standard for law enforcement.

First and foremost we are dealing with a culture problem. I'm sure many of us have worked in a toxic environment before. Good people tend to get squeezed out of those places which allows the toxicity to flourish. We have all heard the "bad apple" argument when speaking of officers. This is closely followed by the "then why are the good apples quiet?" argument. The problem is in the repercussions whistle blowers face in a system as corrupt as the "blue wall of silence.". I suggest robust whistle blower protections. Let's give all of the good cops the chance and the support to make positive change from the inside.

This leads me to my second point. Accountability is a big issue that needs to be addressed. When a police officer acts out with excessive force, sometimes to the point of lives lost, consequences are rarely seen. At present, it appears to the public that the worst that happens is the offending officer is fired but then is able to find employment, continuing to hold the job of officer, at another precinct. Therefore, it is my suggestion that in order to hold these officers accountable for their actions, I propose an independent and diverse oversight committee with the authority to hold police accountable. Even to the extent that the police officers can lose their privilege to be an officer in the state of Oregon for the most violent of offenses.

My final suggestion addresses a way to help prevent these offenses from happening at all. In many industries there are ongoing educational requirements. Information Technology and Health Care are two examples. People are required to prove they continue to learn by certifying and then re-certifying. This ensures the information they are exposed to is current. I suggest a similar system for law enforcement. Officers should be required to prove competency on a regular basis through continued education and training, followed by testing. More granular certifications can be implemented as well. For example, only officers certified in de-escalation and mental illness can be sent out to mental health related calls.

People all over our state, the nation, and even the world are watching us. Let's get this one right.