

My name is Esther Schwartz and I am a resident of Clackamas County.

I am very concerned about the need for police reform in the broadest terms. There is little the police are getting right these days. The public's perception of the police is negative and officers are not seen as helpful, protective members of the communities they serve. Rather they are seen as "the enemy".

I understand that policing is a difficult and dangerous profession. However the focus of policing has shifted from protection to enforcement. The police have become militarized as evidenced by their uniforms, their tactics and their weapons. They have little to no direct positive contact and connection with the communities they serve.

Police need to be accountable for their actions just as every other citizen is. Their job is dangerous so they require a great deal of training in de-escalation techniques and in how to assess a variety of situations. They are not trained social workers nor are they mental health professionals, nor should they be. Not every incident that police respond to needs a police response. Some situations would be better and more successfully handled by social workers and/or mental health professionals. They all can and should work cooperatively and collaboratively together to get the best outcome in any given situation.

I fully support the work of the Joint Committee as outlined in the public hearing agenda. Police Reform is a complex and sensitive issue but it is one that must be addressed. Right now, there are too many killings of innocent people, overwhelmingly people of color. Systemic and institutional racism exists throughout our society; the police are no exception and it must be eradicated.

Another area that needs transparency and reform is the police union. Qualified immunity is unjust. There should not be one standard of acceptable job performance for police and another standard for everyone else.

Thank you for the opportunity to be heard. Esther Schwartz