



Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 2328 (vehicle theft)

To: House Committee on Judiciary

From: Michael Selvaggio, for Oregon Coalition of Police and Sheriffs

Date: March 12, 2019

Chair Williamson, members of the committee:

The Oregon Coalition of Police and Sheriffs (ORCOPS) represents line officers and sheriffs' deputies throughout the State of Oregon. We are the state's largest law enforcement organization, and are comprised of over forty local law enforcement organizations.

We would like to express our strong support of HB 2328, and urge the Committee's support.

In 2014, the Oregon Court of Appeals set an extremely high bar for determining culpability in car theft cases, stating that it would be an "inferential leap" to assume that a suspect in possession of a stolen vehicle knew that the possession was "without consent of the owner." Functionally, this means that many suspects can avoid prosecution by claiming ignorance, even in the face of overwhelming and incontrovertible evidence of the act of the theft.

Whether one feels that was a correct reading of the law or the intention behind it, the results are indisputable: Since 2014, Portland has seen a significant uptick in vehicular theft, far outpacing the national average. Aside from the generalized frustration at this statutory loophole, this has an extremely adverse effect on families who end up seeing their primary mode of transportation (and oftentimes their most significant asset) vanish without much legal recourse... and without any meaningful disincentive to the perpetrators.

Passing HB 2328 will close this loophole and restore some meaning to Oregon's vehicular theft statutes. We urge your AYE vote.