

University of Oregon Police Association  
2141 E. 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Eugene OR 97403  
[UOPAPresident@gmail.com](mailto:UOPAPresident@gmail.com)  
541-621-8094

**Attention: Chair Williamson and Members of the House Judiciary Committee**

**Please place on the record for HB 3338**

To Whom It May Concern

This letter was drafted to address concerns regarding specific legislation pending, HB 3338.

We, the University of Oregon Police Officer's Association (a collective bargaining unit including all sworn police officers with the University of Oregon) would first like to clarify that there is no distinction in training, authority, and oath of office between a University of Oregon police officer and any other police officer in the State Of Oregon. We are police officers, trained and equipped to serve and protect our university community, and all people in the State of Oregon. We can and often are called to support other communities and departments when critical needs arise.

While this moment in history reflects an intense focus on ensuring police departments are fair, accountable, and professional, there is no legitimate movement to dissolve or disband police departments. The bill itself doesn't question that there should be a University of Oregon Police Department. It simply presumes to mandate how the department should be equipped. However, as an association of police officers we can assure you that disarming a department is exactly the same as disbanding the department. It is irresponsible and unconscionable to send people out to defend and protect others, to keep victims safe from further harm, without the tools to do so. Firefighters and paramedics do not use their protective equipment all the time. But they do not go into burning buildings without the tools to combat fires and survive harsh environments, not because they are not brave, but because they only become further victims. Police officers serve every day affecting positive results with only our training and desire to do so. But we also cannot serve effectively without being equipped to do so, and by definition we do not get to choose those moments when seconds count.

There are several reasons why this proposed bill will have consequences that harm not only our faculty, staff, and students, but also the community as a whole.

First, some service will need to fill the vacuum should this agency cease to be able to serve. Private security is often farmed out to the lowest bidder and has virtually no accountability. The minimum standard is 14-24 hours of training and passing a computerized background check. We as police officers receive a minimum of four months of training, and an extensive background check including an investigator making personal contacts with prior employers, relations, acquaintances, investigations of financial and mental stability, etc. And there is no mandated ongoing training for security, as there is for police officers, nor oversight from State and Federal agencies.

The University of Oregon is spread throughout the Eugene/Springfield metropolitan area. Trying to utilize municipal police for the university's community is a strain upon the resources of the city, one the city did not ask for and is ill-equipped to deal with.

The fact is that a university has unique needs that often can't be addressed with a usual policing approach. As a university we have our own institutional leadership. We also have our own student led government that works to represent a burgeoning set of ideals in a safe environment. All of our students have families and loved ones that reside all over the globe but have a stake in the university's safety management. All of these interested parties require a responsive law enforcement presence mindful at once of real and perceptual issues. Issues that confront us every day are the disproportionately high levels of sexual crime, exceedingly dense residential populations, large and complex venues, and exceedingly elastic populations which sometimes balloon to over 100,000 on game days. There are disproportionately large communities of under-represented and vulnerable peoples. These challenges are managed through our officers' involvement in the university community, our leadership's cooperation with student government and university officials, and hundreds of partnerships all across campus that are unique to our department.

Our community has called out for more service on the fringes of our campus in the West University District, South University Neighborhood, and dense areas of off-campus student living. We are called on by our students, staff, and faculty to fulfill a need created by a municipality which is unable to serve those populations effectively. Our work reduces wait times, helps mitigate and solve property crimes, and provides for immediate response to life safety issues.

Universities, especially those bearing a significant public profile such as the University of Oregon, are targets. An omnipresent concern for a University Police Officer is the threat of active shooters, bombings, and other mass casualty events. Preventing and responding to these events requires a higher level of training, unique programs, and strong familiarity and partnership with our campus.

The University of Oregon Police department has elevated our level of ongoing training in response to these unique challenges. We have increased critical skills training including active shooter response training. We have implemented an Explosive Detection Canine Program, and we train officers in Crisis Intervention and Crisis Negotiation, have a dignitary protection program, and train our officers on HAZMAT and Explosive threats. This is not just our training, as we also include students, staff, and faculty to plan for worst case scenarios.

While hypothetical scenarios paint a picture, University of Oregon Police Officers in fact protect our community from tragedy on a regular basis.

In 2016 a University of Oregon Police Officer stopped and arrested a subject on campus who was armed with a fixed blade knife. That subject was found to have used that same knife to murder a college-aged female less than a week prior to that.

In 2017 University of Oregon Police Officers were first on scene to a report of an active shooting at 90 Commons Drive where a male armed with a handgun and a rifle fired multiple rounds at citizens then fled the area. University of Oregon Police Officers were the ones to locate the vehicle hours later as it traveled back toward campus, and subsequently arrested the shooter.

In 2018 three University of Oregon Police Officers located and arrested a subject who had committed a shooting at East 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Ferry Street, hours earlier. His bullets had struck a college-aged female in the back of the head before he fled onto the University of Oregon Campus. During the course of the arrest the subject attempted to use his firearm against the University of Oregon Police Officers and they were able to take him into custody without anyone being injured.

In each of these cases University of Oregon Police Officers used their knowledge, training, and experiences to solve and stop serious criminal incidents that directly affect our community. This represents only a fraction of the serious crimes that would go undeterred without University of Oregon Police Officers, and every University of Oregon Police Officer has their own stories of instances where we were the deciding factor in ensuring our community was safe and secure.

Any police officer in the state could come in and wield the same authority as we, police officers with the University of Oregon, do. However, our community deserves and expects a higher level of responsiveness and partnership. A bill to disarm, and therefore disband, this department would deprive our campus community of their right to be represented in law enforcement the way they deserve and expect. It would deprive our neighbors in the city surrounding us of our assistance in combating the crime that affects us all. It would deprive us all of police officers who are desperately needed to be the voice of justice for those who are smaller, weaker, under-represented, intimidated, or just alone; and yet just as human and just as deserving of the inalienable right of security as anyone born to privilege.

By working hard to shield and protect their community from crime, to provide a sense of safety and security, and to isolate those bad actors who would prey on the innocent, the Police Department causes the community to believe it is inherently safe and secure and does not need police.

However well-intentioned the framers of this bill were, and we have no trouble believing that they are seekers for change and betterment, the emotive hammer they are wielding is being used to legislate a drastic, ill-conceived, simplistic fix to a nuanced, complicated, and difficult issue. It will have consequences that negatively affect all of us on a practical, concrete level. They are attempting to heal an illness by suppressing the entire immune system in pursuit of relief from one symptom. Emotively, we all understand. Logically, we are ill-served and would be better off spending our energy in a productive, not counter-productive, approach.

We look forward to continuing to serve our community of students, staff, and faculty.