

Testimony in support of HB 3338 for the House Judiciary Committee
March 21, 2019

I'm here to speak about the impacts of arming campus police, or CPSO, on PSU students. I was a student in 2014 and witnessed the process that led to the arming of CPSO. As a faculty member, I've participated in discussions about CPSO in faculty senate, Board of Trustee meetings, and support #DisarmPSU. Frankly, I am concerned for our students. This fall our students camped out on the steps of the Campus Public Safety Office, demanding the disarming of CPSO. As this debate drags on and our campus community remains divided, I am concerned for the safety of students who participate in the #DisarmPSU movement on a variety of levels. I'm concerned about the ways they could be targeted, in a city and state that has not only a history but a present of white supremacist activities. I'm concerned that the students whose voices should be most heard in conversations about policing are not being taken seriously by our Board or administration. I'm concerned that students are draining precious energy that could be devoted towards study in solving problems they didn't create. To be clear, I'm impressed by their capacity to imagine community-oriented policing that is truly accountable to those it serves. I just don't think they should have to do this work as a means of ensuring their survival.

I want to acknowledge that some students, faculty, and staff feel more secure with CPSO armed, but the majority realize the threat arming CPSO poses for students of color and other marginalized members of our community. Their fears aren't unfounded. Police brutality against communities of color in the US has drawn international attention from the United Nations Human Rights Council and been labeled a threat to public health by the American Public Health Association. Students are also aware of the many high-profile cases of police brutality in recent years that have spurred calls for police reform. As many students know, the attention to these cases is new. The problem is not.

The story of #Disarm has been minimized in some local media as the work of "a small number of student and community groups." This is not true. The majority of PSU faculty and staff have consistently opposed arming CPSO. As my colleague Dr. José Padín, president of PSU AAUP, highlighted in our March 7 Board of Trustees meeting, whenever faculty and staff have been asked- both in 2014 before the decision to arm, and this year after the death of Jason Washington, we have been opposed. Most of us feel it is inappropriate for campus police to be serving a life-or-death function in an urban campus that is as integrated into the surrounding community as PSU. Last year, the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission updated its vision statement for – "a future in which all Oregonians—and especially those whom our systems have underserved and marginalized—benefit from the transformational power of high-quality postsecondary education." This is the vision that my colleagues and I work for every day. We believe that armed campus police make underserved and marginalized students MORE vulnerable, not less.

Thank you, Rep. Hernandez, for filing HB 3338. I have asked colleagues across campus who are in support of these statements to add their names as well.

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I am in support of House Bill 3338, which would disarm police on PSU and UO campuses.

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