

Hello Chair Williamson and members of the committee,

My name is Hannah Ortloff and I am currently attending the University of Oregon. It is my belief that how a person feels around armed police stems primarily from their own interactions with police throughout their lives. With this in mind, I will tell you about a few experiences I've had with armed police throughout my life, and subsequently my thoughts on an armed campus police (UOPD) and the effects on students like myself.

I attended Portland Public Schools kindergarten through 12th grade in my neighborhood school district. These schools participated in the "Zero Tolerance" policies launched in the nineties, that essentially involved the state in school disciplinary practices. For instance, in high school, if you were caught skipping class you'd take a walk with our School Resource Officer (SRO) who would give you a scared-straight style pep talk. In case you are unfamiliar with Zero Tolerance rhetoric, SROs are members of the local police department, fully armed, stationed in schools for "quick response" to crime or whatever else the school happens to need a fully armed officer for (like pulling kids into 4th period).

Obviously this interaction described is harmless on its face. And I chose it to represent a low-stakes scenario that still remains with me today, seven years later to demonstrate that police-civilian (or in this case police-student) interactions are significant due to the power imbalance already at play, that is then exacerbated by the presence of a gun. If the majority of police interactions you've experienced have been positive, the power imbalance might not scare you, but rather give you a sense of security that the state is doing its job in protecting you. On the other hand, if the majority of police interactions you've experienced have been negative you'll tend to feel at least insecure in the presence of police, if not endangered.

The feeling I had when taking a walk with our SRO is similar to how I feel when I see armed UOPD officers walking on campus. It's extremely hard to interact with police and feel safe when you've been witness to police brutality. During my time at Madison High School, a boy named Moose who hung out nextdoor at Glenhaven Skatepark was shot by Portland Police. He was on his knees, but they shot him several times in the head and chest. They had suspected him of a carjacking, which everyone who knew him seriously doubted. Posters of his face, still very baby-like plastered the skatepark and our hallways: "Justice for Quanice Hayes." He was seventeen. A year later, a girl in my church group asked for prayer for her family after her cousin, Terrell Johnson, 24, was shot by police. He had a knife on him and was struggling with mental health issues. The police failed to deescalate the situation, and instead chose to end his life.

These are two extreme cases of police violence that I, and people I love, have been affected by. They both carry larger implications about how we police in America, but they're also always looming in my mind when I see armed officers on campus. Policing in cities like Portland looks differently than it does on the UO campus. There are instances where I obviously recognize the need for an officer to be armed in certain settings. But on a college campus, where a majority of the crimes occurring according to the UOPD crime logs are petty, non-violent misdemeanors, full armament of a police force dedicated to the UO community seems more problematic than helpful. There have been several instances during my time here of UOPD Officers pointing their weapons at students for literally no reason, which the police find out after the fact. In light of some of the experiences I've described, that is extremely traumatic.

Having an armed UO police force ignores that there are so many students on campus that have had frightening, violent interactions with police and do not feel safe around them. I believe HB 3338 will address this problem, by not allowing UOPD officers to carry guns on campus. The primary initiative of UOPD is to keep students safe; their armament is antithetical to that at its core. It's time our legislature recognize that armed police forces on college campus promote a climate of fear and distrust between students and cops, at times resulting in the reckless killing of people the police are sworn to protect.

Respectfully,

Hannah Ortloff