

Chair Williamson and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I am writing regarding HB 3338. I understand from some of my colleagues at Portland State University that they are against the arming of campus police at our institution. We have had two deaths on campus since my arrival – one a mere block from my office. Only one of these has received attention because it involved Campus Public Safety officers and a civilian. Yet, it is important to take into consideration both events as they both occurred in close proximity (one directly outside and the other across the street), from where students reside. Dissenting voices of faculty, staff, and students have become lost regarding the disarming of campus police at PSU due to fear of harassment, ostracism, and frankly, bullying.

I believe that as the report presented to the university and the Board of Trustees by the firm Margolis Healy pointed out, their recommendations would not appease those who fell on either side of the issue, particularly those who vehemently oppose the presence of armed police at Portland State University. As a sociologist, chair of a Black Studies Department, and African American woman, I find it necessary to express my point of view. There are times when I do not feel safe living in a state that is predominately white and where hostility towards Black women, on and off the campus I work on have resulted in concerns about my personal safety.

Two years ago this May, a white supremacist harassed an African American woman on a MAX train and the next day, harassed two more Black women, leading to an unfortunate murder of two men and the serious injury of a third (a PSU student) who came to their defense. While mention of one of the Black women as Muslim has been mentioned, the fact that all three were Black women has not been addressed by those who claim to be supporters of social justice. My point is that if someone were to come to the building I work in on campus or into my classes, be it a white supremacist, angry armed partner of a student, or other situation that might be life threatening, I would hope that there would be a way to protect me, my colleagues and my students.

Let there be no mistake in my comments. I am concerned about the potential shooting by armed police whether on a university campus or not. I was a department chair at a university in New Haven, Connecticut during the Virginia Tech shootings. Our campus police were armed. Yet, I remember pondering how I could protect office staff if an armed shooter were in the building. I contacted the Facilities Department and asked that they change locks on office doors in our building so they locked from the inside. I am not sure what the procedure would be to ensure the campus community at PSU feels safe in the event of a potential situation such as this. I hope we never have to find out. Thus, the reality that I have is that anyone may be armed, not just the police. However, I know that there are those who feel safe because there are armed officers on campus.

In these uncertain political and social times where hate and violence is increasing, I would like to see viable plans for protection of university campuses so that everyone not only feels safe, but also is, safe. I am not convinced that this means a complete disarming of campus police but I also do not believe that it is necessary to arm *all* police officers on a campus. I also do not believe that the arming or disarming of a campus is dependent upon the size of a community as small campuses and large ones are potentially at risk. Issues related to homelessness, substance abuse, and mental illness are real concerns that many urban campuses have to contend with on a daily basis. We cannot be heavy-handed when it is unwarranted but we also must protect the safety of community members, students, faculty, and staff who are on our campus. As I stated earlier, I simply am not convinced this requires a total disarmament of campus police, and respectfully request that institutions decide for themselves with the input of external reviewers, members of the campus, and community partners.

Thank you for your time.

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"The first time someone shows you who they are, believe them." Maya Angelou