I'm writing in support of House Bill HB 3338, which was introduced on March 21, 2019. The bill prohibits police officers commissioned by a public university from carrying firearms as police officers outside of police headquarters, if public university is located in city with population exceeding 150,000.

As a faculty member at Portland State University, I've witnessed the impact that having armed officers has had on the campus community. Rather than assure a perceived level of safety, it has created a culture of mistrust, and even disdain, among a significant portion of the student body, staff, and faculty toward our public safety and police officers. Tragically, it also meant that a PSU police intervention last summer, in an altercation which started in a bar near campus, and later spilled out onto the street, resulted in the PSU police shooting and killing a man, Jason Washington. While Portland Police investigated and found this shooting to be justified, given their own record with shooting and killing unarmed civilians, that's hardly been a source of resolution regarding this tragedy. Frankly, it comes across as a foregone conclusion more than a finding of objective truth.

With HB 3338, Representatives Hernandez, McLain, and Sanchez show they have heard the will of the majority of those, who in our daily lives, significantly interact with PSU, through working or studying there. They also show understanding of the campus culture and perspectives presented by many people of color on our campus. They know this issue has been an on-going struggle on campus for years. The Portland Police Bureau is still charged with policing the nearby business district and city park blocks which Portland State is built on either side of, so armed officers are available as needed. What we don't need or want is campus police being armed.

I'm fully in support of HB 3338, and by this letter, I am asking that you support it as well.

Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Marlene Howell
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