



**Pacific Northwest Family Circle
and the Oregon Chapter of Protect Our Stolen Treasures (P.O.S.T.)**

Date: April 4, 2019

To: The Honorable Jennifer Williamson, Chair; The Honorable Chris Gorsek, Vice-Chair; The Honorable Sherrie Sprenger, Vice Chair; Members of the House Judiciary Committee

From: **Shiloh Wilson-Phelps**, Co-Founder, Pacific Northwest Family Circle

Re: Support for district attorney accountability: HB 3224

Chair Williamson, Vice Chairs Sprenger and Gorsek, and members of the House Judiciary Committee

My name is Shiloh Wilson-Phelps and I represent Pacific Northwest Family Circle. Our mission is to join families, like mine, in Oregon and Washington to struggle for justice for their Loved Ones killed by police. We are actively focused on district attorney accountability through our monthly Feet to Fire protests and our work on a platform, called DA for the People, to get better district attorneys elected throughout Oregon.

We are tracking proposals that bring more oversight to district attorney offices. We support House Bill 3224.

Pacific Northwest Family Circle (PNWFC) believes that district attorneys and prosecutors are the most powerful actors in the criminal justice system. But unfortunately too much of how they operate is a mystery to stakeholders, community members, and the public. That is because many district attorney offices do not have baseline policies around core functions of their departments.

PNWFC Family Members have all experienced a lack of transparency and accountability as they navigate the justice system after a Loved One is killed by police. This lack of transparency is shared by at least 368 families throughout Oregon, because *in the last 27 years, over 368 community members have been killed by police in Oregon and not one of the police officers that killed these Loved Ones had ever suffered a punishment or negative consequences*. Instead, PNWFC Family Members struggling for justice together look on as police officers are given a paid vacation while the police investigate themselves, many of them then get promotions, and even medals of valor for shooting Loved Ones, even when they are running away from police.

A decision to prosecute the police lies within the power of the District Attorneys of Oregon, and yet not one case has ever gone to trial. Our community wants to know why.

The fact that many district attorney offices have not developed baseline policies that are publicly available is deeply concerning. For our PNWFC Family Members struggling together for justice for our Loved Ones, a lack of guidance has led to biased outcomes, confusion for victims and defendants, and prosecutorial decisions that can be out of line with the community's values. And since there are no requirements that district attorney offices create these policies, these departments can operate in the dark, and without motivation to change their priorities and procedures to reflect best practices.

House Bill 3224 is the right step to addressing these issues. The bill requires that district attorney offices develop policies around critical functions, such as which prosecutors are qualified to handle which cases, how to charge certain crimes, what approach to use for plea bargains, civil compromise, and diversion programs, and how to best engage victims. It also requires that they update their policies periodically, to take into account new research, data-informed practices, and changing community priorities. This bill can help ensure that we have consistency, reliability, and transparency in our criminal justice system.

Pacific Northwest Family Circle asks that the committee vote in favor of House Bill 3224. This is a valuable and critical step to ensuring that our fundamental rights apply to all Oregonians.

Thank you

Sincerely,
Shiloh Wilson-Phelps
Co-Founder, Pacific Northwest Family Circle

This email address is shared by:
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