



June 25, 2020

Co-Chairs Senator and Senate President Peter Courtney, and Representative and House Speaker Tina Kotek; co-Vice Chairs Senator Fred Girod and Representative Christine Drazen; and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) of OR, we respectfully request your support for House Bill 4203.

Systemic racism is firmly rooted in the U.S. and today's injustices mirror our shameful history. There can be no justice or equality when black, indigenous and people of color are seen as less deserving of basic human and civil rights.

Even though many police departments ban the use of chokeholds, it is clear that they are still being widely used.¹ Force is most frequently used in confrontations with people of color.² This practice also continues regardless of the patently obvious potential for serious bodily injury or death. Chokeholds are also often employed as a first choice when verbally confronted by an individual rather than as a last or rarely used option.³

In my experience as a former federal prosecutor and criminal defense attorney, I often encountered police officers who understood only too well how things "really" worked -- meaning that there was often a huge difference between what is said, i.e. the rules, and what actually takes place, i.e. the final outcome. Police officers need to know that it is not only their local jurisdiction that may ban chokeholds, but that the people of Oregon affirm that chokeholds are not permitted in any circumstance.

We urge your support for House Bill 4203.

Respectfully submitted,

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¹ <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/16/877527974/how-decades-of-bans-on-police-chokeholds-have-fallen-short>, Monika Evstatieva and Tim Mak, How Decades of Bans on Police Chokeholds Have Fallen Short, NPR Morning Edition, June 16, 2020.

² <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/06/03/us/minneapolis-police-use-of-force.html>, Richard A. Oppel, Jr. and Lazaro Gamio, Minneapolis Police Use Force Against Black People at 7 Times the Rate of Whites, New York Times, June 3, 2020.

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/13/nyregion/police-keep-using-chokeholds-despite-bans-and-scrutiny.html>, Al Baker and J. David Goodman, Despite Scrutiny, Police Chokeholds Persist in New York City, New York Times, Jan. 12, 2015.