

Hello,

I'm writing to voice strong support for the proposed police accountability measures put forward in HBs 4207, 4201, 4205, 4208, and 4203. Thank you for paying attention to this critical issue and working toward change. While I think we need to go further than what was proposed, I will support these steps as building blocks to the future I want to see in Oregon and across the country. We need to do a lot of work to transform the structures that our modern policing system has been built upon. Please, see this package of bills as a starting point and not as a way to pacify tensions.

HB 4207 would establish a database of police officer discipline records. Again, this is important, but I would urge more transparency. Subsection 3 states that disciplinary investigations are not to be shared if there was no discipline to the employee. I fear that this is what already happens, where internal investigations have shown to be too permissive. We are already operating under conditions consistent with subsection 4 [(d)][e]: the public's trust and confidence is already eroded to a point where we require more radical transparency and accountability, as acknowledged in section 6. We are indeed in a state of emergency.

HB 4201 addresses the need for increased investigations done by external sources, especially in the case of critical harm caused to an individual by a law enforcement officer. I'd also encourage strengthening subsection 5a by requiring a description of de-escalation tactics used before engaging deadly physical force. We need to emphasize this to move away from the over-reliance of using lethal means to control situations that do not warrant lethality (and there should be very very few situations that call for use of deadly physical force).

HB 4205 would require police officers to intervene and report behaviors of fellow officers acting unethically, illegally, or in violation of rules or policies. To ensure that this practice is adopted, I urge you to include protections for intervening officers-- several stories of intervening officers being retaliated against and pushed out of the force have come to light in recent weeks. Please be explicit in mandating protection against retaliation and harassment after intervening and reporting as well as a similar external investigative process to enter when those situations arise.

HB 4208 has my full support. Weapons and tactics of war have no place on our streets.

For HB 4203, relating to peace officers' use of deadly physical force, I worry that section 4 is too permissive, even with the addition of section 2. The standard of "reasonable belief" warranting permission to kill has always been troubling. How many stories have we heard of deadly physical force being justified through reasonable belief of fear for one's life where the person who was killed was killed while running away from the law enforcement officer? How can we ensure that the standard of reasonable belief truly holds up? How can we ensure that the "reasonable belief" has not been generated from biases against Black, Indigenous, and other people of color?

Again, thank you for taking these steps. Please move these bills forward as you dream bigger. We can do more to ensure greater transparency and accountability from those who are supposed to keep us safe. We are on the cusp of radical change, and you are charged with leading it.

Kris Bifulco