

June 25, 2020

To the Members of the Joint Committee:

I have great empathy for the police in our times, but I also think that we have set them up for failure. I don't know what other jurisdictions do in our state, but I have read that among Portland's minimum requirements to become an officer is a GED and being 20.5 years of age. My first thought is, what can you be thinking. I know that it is hard to recruit people to do many of the jobs required. In fact, I sometimes wonder how they can do it day after day, seeing the very worse behavior known to man. But the very nature of this work requires that they be better prepared, so here are my thoughts:

1. I would suspect that the low age barrier is made to facilitate someone transitioning from the military into the police force. If someone enlists at 17, this works out just about right. I would propose that this doesn't allow that person to "stand down" when confronted with split second decisions. They will fall back on their impulse to do something, right or wrong.

Also, psychologists have determined that the human brain doesn't mature until at least 25 years old. Does it then make sense to put a lethal weapon in someone's hands whose brain is not capable of deciphering that there might be another (better) solution to the problem at hand?

2. Educational requirements: I understand that for some, a GED is a significant achievement. Nevertheless, given the nature of the job, it really is not enough. At minimum, every officer should have at least an associate's degree, and even better, a BA. Education broadens a person's outlook and helps reinforce good decision making. This requirement would also provide the time needed to mature mentally, and if appropriate, separate from a military mindset.

Thank you for the work that you are doing. The anxiety that these times present does not go unnoticed. Please endeavor to meet each other with a generous spirit so that something can be accomplished.

Sincerely,

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