

Date: 2.3.21

RE: Letter Supporting HB 2928

To the Chair, Vice-Chair and Members of the House Subcommittee on Equitable Policing,

I am sharing my personal testimony in support of HB 2928. The trauma caused to our community, schools, unhoused population and environment at the hands of policing agencies using chemical incapacitates, kinetic impact projectiles and sound devices is an egregious violation of human rights. There must be accountability for the misconduct within the streets by Oregon law enforcement.

I'm a Multnomah county resident. I work as a nurse caring for birthing people during a respiratory pandemic. I am a mother of two small children. For numerous nights beginning this summer, I would sing my little ones to sleep and then join with many to non-violently protest police brutality in support of Black lives.

I witnessed and experienced the repeated tear-gassing of non-violent crowds of protestors including the use of impact projectiles and flash-bangs. The sheer amount of unprovoked force from law enforcement was beyond alarming. I saw medics being beaten with batons. I experienced weapons pointed at me threatening further force, flash bangs and immeasurable amounts of tear gas deployed against mothers, pregnant people, grandmothers, veterans, the unhoused and all types of residents of this community. All of this is taking place within the backdrop of a respiratory pandemic. It shouldn't matter who we were. It is unacceptable for anyone to endure this at the hands of law enforcement for peacefully protesting. Shame on us for funding the irresponsible use of policing resources meanwhile hospitals barely had enough masks to support patient care.

Even after bans from our Governor, Kate Brown, and Mayor, Ted Wheeler, the local police department worked alongside the federal and state agents to continue to use tear gas and declare riots early in the evenings when the crowd was peaceful. And repeatedly, I was shocked to see the lack of accountability and the level of harm done to those enacting their right to peacefully assemble.

In the 2020 report put out by OHSU and Don't Shoot PDX among others titled, Riot Control Agents: Systemic Reassessment of Adverse effects on Health, Mental Stability, and Social Inequities they state,

“The local government expresses that they will only use tear gas in life threatening situations, however the patterns of use of excessive force via tear gas can be seen through the amount of witnesses that are sharing their stories with the courts. It is evidence that due to the lack of standardizing a SOP for the deploying tear gas by legal authorities to avoid adverse effects to the public and surrounding ecological system, the use of RCAs such as tear gas should be banned from use.”

So hear my story. Let the voices of those within the community guide you to support HB 2928 and continue to create regulations and accountability to end further harm.

Thank you,

Heidi Pollard-Hermann, RN, MA, MSN