



Service Employees International Union – Oregon State Council

6401 SE Foster ▪ Portland, OR 97206

March 9, 2021

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 621. My name is Alberto Gallegos and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Oregon State Council. SEIU Oregon is composed of SEIU Local 503 and SEIU Local 49, which together represent over 85,000 people. Local 49 represents private sector janitors, property service workers, light manufacturing, and healthcare workers; while Local 503 represents homecare workers, private nonprofit workers, in-home childcare providers, nursing home workers, and state and local government employees.

Last November, voters in Portland passed ballot measure 26-217. This measure created a new Community Police Oversight Board, which will be responsible for investigating reports of misconduct, imposing disciplinary actions, and recommending policing policy to the Portland Police Bureau and Portland City Council. Specifically, the Board will be responsible for investigating deaths that occur in custody, complaints of force that result in injury, discrimination against protected classes, and violations of constitutional rights. A large and diverse coalition of faith, labor, civil rights groups, social justice activists, education, victims of police violence, and allies worked together to see this over the finish line.

The idea to have a community police oversight board is not new. Our communities have been advocating for these types of changes for decades. The call for police accountability and racial justice is loud and clear; we are more than ready for transformative and progressive change. And nearly 82% of Portland agreed when they voted in support of measure 26-217.

Unfortunately, as with all transformative change, there are always those who are in opposition; either due to fear of change, misunderstanding, or lack of information. As a labor union that represents workers from various sectors throughout the state, we have heard some folks call SB 621 an anti-union bill, claiming that it is “a blatant attempt to unnecessarily circumvent Oregon’s long-standing Collective Bargaining laws to the detriment of our police officers” and that it “sets a precedent for local governments to no longer work constructively with employee unions.” This is not true.

As a labor union, we would never support a policy that would undermine any workers’ right to bargain. This bill would merely aid the quick and efficient implementation of the community oversight board by providing the City of Portland with clear direction without having it be subject to bargaining. Police officers would still retain their right to bargain their wages, healthcare, other benefits, etc. in order to improve their own work environment. This bill only calls for a more efficient method of implementing what 82% of Portland residents already voted for.

SEIU strongly supports this bill, and as such, we urge you to please support SB 621.

Thank you,

Alberto Gallegos
Political and Government Relations Organizer
SEIU, Oregon State Council