

**Testimony in Support of SB 621**  
**March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

I am writing to express urgent and unreserved support for SB 621. The will of the people was manifest in a vote of 82% in favor of implementing 26-217. Tragically, Oregon has a long history of police brutality, undoubtedly supported by its racist history of forbidding blacks to own land and including in its constitution that slavery was not allowed, and neither were African Americans! History has an impact on the present and it seems to me that it's terribly important to be aware of that history and how it shapes our thinking without even realizing it. It takes a conscious effort to erase racism.

There is also a history of failed attempts at reforming the system, a history of innocent people killed because the police made poor choices: Nathan Thomas, Kendra James, James Chasse and many more. None of these people deserved to die. We desperately need to change how we do things. We must hold police accountable for their choices, for lost lives. They are not hired to murder the innocent or the guilty. They are hired to protect all of us against harm. WHY is it that so many of us live in fear of the police?

The entire culture of the police force needs changing and this is a crucial step towards creating a system that can actually serve the people rather than protect those who have done harm and need to be held responsible. Thank you for your efforts and time in giving serious and thoughtful consideration to something that has a significant and lasting impact on us all.

Sincerely,  
Melissa Nickerson