



Testimony of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation  
Senate Committee on Judiciary & Ballot Measure 110 Implementation  
SB 731  
March 18, 2021

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

My name is Corinne Sams and I am an elected member of the Board of Trustees for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony from the Umatilla Reservation today to urge your support for SB 731. The bill will ensure the multitude of state police reform bills now under consideration do not end up indirectly regulating tribal law enforcement agencies and officers.

SB 412, the bill recognizing tribal officers as state officers, has proven to be a success since it was signed into law with all seven Oregon tribal police departments now being SB 412 compliant. Due to the Kurtz decision, prior to SB 412, there was a lot of uncertainty as to how tribal police departments were going to be able to serve their community's public safety needs when it came to dealing with non-Indian offenders. We thank you for your support to fix this issue.

The way SB 412 is currently structured, to be recognized as a state officer a tribal officer and tribal law enforcement agency must comply with certain Oregon DPSST regulations. For off-reservation tribal officer conduct this makes sense and is not problematic. But when it comes to tribal officer conduct on reservations, and acting within the sovereign authority of a tribal nation, it presents a problem as you will hear from other witnesses.

SB 731 gets around these sovereignty issues by making it clear that SB 412 requires tribal officers to comply with state regulations when engaging in off-reservation conduct and does not apply when a tribal officer is engaging in on reservation conduct or otherwise within the sovereign jurisdiction of a tribal nation. This gives proper respect for both state and tribal sovereignty. And, it ensures tribal nations will be able to address police reform of their own agencies in a way that is appropriate for their communities without running afoul of SB 412 recognition.

I want to thank you all for your consideration of this important bill. I commend you for the work you all are doing in the area of police reform, and I share some of those concerns. Like you, tribes also have concerns about what is appropriate police conduct and we want to ensure that when addressing those issues tribes can do so unfettered and without concern as to whether it conflicts with differing state regulations. SB 731 fixes those concerns.

Thank you for your time and consideration.