

Chair Bynum, Vice-Chairs Noble and Power, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Paul Solomon. I am executive director at Sponsors, a nationally recognized prisoner re-entry program in Lane County, where I have worked for the past 20 years. I'm also co-chair of the Criminal Justice Reform and Police Accountability Committee of the Governor's Racial Justice Council.

I am here today to provide an overview of HB 2169. HB 2169 is a product of months of work by members of the Criminal Justice Reform and Police Accountability Committee. This bill furthers the goals of the Racial Justice Council by centering racial equity and the voices of those disproportionately impacted by the current system to reform Oregon's criminal justice and police accountability structures. HB 2169 reflects the work of community members coming together following the tragic death of George Floyd to directly address the disparities that are deeply imbedded in Oregon's criminal justice system. The bill seeks to incentivize alternatives to incarceration, increase police accountability, and provide the public greater access to completed officer misconduct investigations.

Leaders from the public sector, business community and non-profit sector sit on the RJC and its various committees. Our shared goals are to:

- Use data from across sectors of society to support smart, data-driven policy decisions
- Create a Racial Justice Action Plan for six specific areas: Criminal Justice Reform and Police Accountability, Housing and Homelessness, Economic Opportunity, Health Equity, Environmental Equity, and Education Recovery

The committee has spent the last 5 months reviewing data, research, and current policy; and listening to community partners, state agencies, and individuals from across the state. Through this process, we have learned in great detail about the ways in which our state and its systems (whether that's housing, health, criminal justice) are neither working with nor for our most marginalized and historically underserved communities.

I would like to provide some context for a few of the concepts in the bill. First, the provision for Police Oversight authorizes the creation of a police oversight agency or board by cities and counties in Oregon. Oversight agencies will have the ability to:

- Receive complaints and initiate investigations into allegations of officer misconduct;
- Issue findings and recommend disciplinary actions;
- Access all records and data retained by law enforcement agencies;
- Subpoena records and persons necessary to conduct investigations or reviews of alleged officer misconduct.
- Issue reports to the public on its investigations and reviews of law enforcement practices.

Additionally, the -1 amendment for the bill would increase police accountability and oversight by requiring law enforcement officers to inform a stopped person of the reason for the stop and that they have the right to refuse a request to search. Research clearly demonstrates that African Americans are 5 times more likely to be pulled over in their vehicles, and this continues to occur on a routine basis even though we also know that whites are three times more likely to have contraband. We know that profiling is happening and we also know it leads to disproportionate arrest and conviction rates among communities of color.

We also seek to improve transparency by providing greater access to personnel files for police officers who have been investigated for misconduct. This bill would allow members of the public to make public records requests for completed personnel investigations that relate to an interaction between a member of the public and a police officer.

Our committee spent a lot of time discussing the concepts in this bill as a way to move us toward a criminal justice system that values the principles of equity, transparency and accountability. This legislation will create new pathways for accountability and healing through Restorative Justice practices. It will provide greater transparency and accountability among law enforcement. And it will work to increase trust of our public safety systems among BIPOC communities in Oregon.

On behalf of the Racial Justice Council and the Criminal Justice Reform and Police Accountability Committee, I strongly encourage the House Judiciary Committee to support these necessary reforms in HB 2169 at this critical time in our state's history.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Solomon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Paul" and last name "Solomon" clearly distinguishable.

Paul Solomon

Executive Director, Sponsors Inc.

Co-Chair, Racial Justice Council's Criminal Justice Reform and Police Accountability Committee