



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 621

May 4, 2021

House Committee On Judiciary

Russell Lum

Good afternoon, Chair Bynum, Vice Chairs Noble and Power, and members of the committee. My name is Russell Lum, I am a political organizer for Oregon Nurses Association. We represent 15,000 nurses — including RNs and advanced practice nurses — and allied health workers. Oregon Nurses Association and the Nurse Practitioners of Oregon come before you today in support of Senate Bill 621, to bring Portland’s Measure 26-217 to fruition and to ensure a path for other local jurisdictions that choose by ballot measure to enact community oversight boards over police conduct.

ONA was proud to support Real Police Accountability, Measure 26-217, in November of 2020. As an ONA statement on racial justice and systemic police violence on June 5, 2020 noted, “Anti-racism is a true union and nursing value which we hold up during the long march towards true justice for all.” Police violence is in the pattern of longstanding racial injustice. On the other hand, police accountability is about community wellbeing, community health, responding to trauma and reducing its severity and frequency, and wielding a tool against the systemic racism. Community-member-directed bodies that have the power to investigate incidents of police misconduct and to establish enforcement actions are sorely needed, as is shown time and time again and not only in the Portland context.

Thus Measure 26-217 is an important concept, an important tool, and more than 81% of the voters agreed. It should be implemented, and with the authority intended it by the voters, including to govern discipline that in the past state law has set aside for collective bargaining. It is time to provide the clarity to local governments that a board in the Real Police Accountability model can do what it set out to do; it is time to provide the fix to the statute that SB 621 entails.

Our members, and ONA’s Cabinet on Health Policy which put forth our support expressed here today, look forward to Measure 26-217 coming to full effect. Our members and the Cabinet further look forward to the legal berth for other local jurisdictions to follow suit. Thank you for valuing an encompassing, system-wide view of health for all, as you consider this bill, and for valuing the voice of caregivers and health professionals. ONA asks you advance Senate Bill 621 without delay.