

Dear Chair Prozanski and the Senate Committee on the Judiciary and Measure 110 Implementation,

I write today in support of Senator Manning's -4A amendment to HB 2929, because freedom, democracy and just rule of law are very important to me. This amendment is about establishing a much more solid baseline of freedom and liberty, and I'll give two main reasons. 1. The people should be able to know about the culture and any misconduct of their police agencies, and be able to decide if they want to change it. That's rarely possible now, because the public is told, by law and practice, that it's police matters to manage themselves, in private. That's not a system of freedom for all, it's a system where problems can exist in secret for decades. We've seen many, many, tragic and harmful examples of this across the state. And 2. Convictions, indictment and incarceration are powerful tools of the state that can take away people's freedom, or kill, threaten or injure them. Those who are pointing the guns with state power, who have the coercion power of our prosecutorial system behind them, must not be permitted to have a culture that causes the public to say, "We have to take them at their word that these highly politicized, armed state agents are not committing misconduct against us or members of their agency." That's not freedom, but a recipe for perpetuation of problems that radiate through other public offices: DA's offices and City Halls and many levels of government.

The state is powerful, and in the US despite serious flaws we have traditions and pride in the nation's attempts to to balance the power of the state and its agents with rights and freedom of people. Adopting Sen Manning's amendment would be a significant step towards balancing that power. The right and center and left all acknowledge the power of the state. At this moment in 2021, this state alone has well over 10,000 people behind bars, and tens of thousands of others coming into contact with state agents. Officers and all law enforcement and justice branch officials are agents of the state. It is time that Oregon lawmakers represent the will of freedom-loving people, and make this a state where the awesome power of law agents is able to be fairly evaluated by those living under its power.

I have admired the way Oregon leaders like Rep Bynum and Sen Manning have attempted to meet the moment of justice. Many people would have stopped and gotten tired but they have not stopped, because their goal has been to withstand the cultural resistance to change to build a new foundation for the state's law enforcement system. That is a very challenging task, especially in a place like the US where law and law practices, like law enforcement, are worshipped and revered. Based on my experience, this amendment is a crucial element of transitioning to a more stable foundation where freedom from oppression and state violence is a reliable feature of criminal justice system culture.

The people should be able to independently define and track misconduct by armed agents of the state.

Please adopt this bill, as amended with -4A.