

HB 2929-A4 testimony:

I strongly support the passage of HB 2929-A4. Oregon urgently needs stronger police accountability measures, and transparency in disciplinary procedures protect Oregonians from unchecked police misconduct.

Police departments in the communities of the State of Oregon were created by the citizens of those communities with the purpose of serving and protecting those citizens. It is critical that we, the citizens of these communities know how the departments and the individual police officers employed in those departments, are performing relative to their charters! We as citizens (their employer) know that the departments rules and policies are being followed correctly and consistently by all. It is critical that disciplinary action is being applied appropriately and consistently among all police employees. It is also critical that this information is shared among all police departments in the state, so that individuals that have failed or are failing to perform to standards are not hired by another department in the State. The compelling rationale for passing this legislation is:

- Access to police disciplinary records is key to policing reform. Lack of transparency perpetuates a culture of secrecy that systematically and pervasively shields police misconduct. The public does not know whether police departments are handling complaints against officers effectively or sweeping them under the rug.
- Oregon is one of 9 states that keeps police misconduct records strictly confidential whether the officers are disciplined or cleared. Judges and juries are unaware if officers who built the cases have a history of lying, coercing witnesses, or other transgressions — even in cases with life-altering consequences.
- Potential for wrongful convictions. Innocent defendants are at risk of being wrongly convicted by officers who have histories of lying, coercion and other misconduct. That is because officer disciplinary records are largely inaccessible to prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, and juries as they assess innocence and guilt.
- Lack of transparency in police discipline. Minority and women police officers frequently report their belief that they are singled out and punished more harshly than their white male counterparts. Additionally, every year there are lawsuits filed by these officers claiming hostile work environments where they were the victims of racial and/or gender discrimination -- conduct that is often swept under the rug. Public access to police

internal affairs files can expose disparities in discipline and make for a better workplace and build greater public trust in law enforcement.

- Transparency is key to establishing trust between police and the people they serve, which is the bedrock of effective community policing.

I strongly urge you to support HB 2929-A4, this A4 amendment is critically important and must be passed to shine a light on police misconduct.