

Submitter: Yusuf Arifin
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure: HB4131

Chair Bynum, Vice Chair Noble, Vice Chair Power, and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Yusuf Arifin (he/him) and I am a junior at Sunset High School in Portland. I am a student passionate about civil liberties and environmental justice. In light of recent events, these passions bring me here today to oppose the base bill for HB 4131 but support the amendment language on dash 3, which is also reflected in HB 4008 dash 8.

I strongly oppose police using weapons of war and tear gas against protestors and communities. Primarily, I am concerned with the environmental impacts of tear gas. An investigation conducted by the City of Portland found that stormwater near tear gas locations had much higher concentrations of metal than other points in the city. These contaminants flow into the Willamette, endangering local wildlife and low-income communities. It is alarming that marginalized species and communities may face an even greater risk than the rest of us - our state should be doing everything in our power to help these groups and be a leader in environmental justice. Unfortunately, this bill does just the opposite.

I'd also like to take a moment to acknowledge the impact this bill would have on youth like me. Young people care deeply about the world around us, and the most powerful way we have of advocating is through protest. I've been to many myself, from environmental equity to racial justice protests. At nearly every event, fellow youth and I have had cordial encounters with law enforcement, but it is deeply concerning to me that many other Oregonians have had very negative experiences. If this bill becomes law, I fear this relationship would become much tenser and that our constitutional rights will be chilled. Youth will be discouraged from making our voices heard and our community participation will sharply drop. These concerns are extremely problematic, especially for a generation that will be inheriting the world's problems. We deserve to have confidence in our ability to protest, not fear being violently silenced.

For these reasons, I strongly urge all members of the committee to oppose the current version of HB 4131 and support the amendment language in dash 3, which is also present in HB 4008 dash 8. Thank you for your time.