

Submitter: Samantha Holt
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure: HB4131

I oppose the City of Portland's base bill in HB 4131 - weakening of restrictions on police use of tear gas and munition weapons against protestors & street medics and support the amendment for stronger protections submitted by civil rights advocates in HB 4131-3.

Tear gas amounts to torture. Its longterm negative impacts on the environment are proven, but more importantly it is by nature indiscriminate, wafting where the wind blows. In city/neighborhood streets it hovers and lingers and seeps into apartments and homes nearby. I witnessed several instances of innocent minors and bystanders, passers by being trapped within PPB's gassing grounds countless nights through the summer of 2020. I think with all the restraining orders against PPB use of force and firsthand accounts of police violence, and even problems within PPB training, and generally earned lack of trust of our police within our community, it is clear PPB is not at this time to be trusted with such an indiscriminate and traumatizing weapon. Tear gas doesn't care if you broke the law or not it chokes you out and blinds you if the wind brings it to you. I witnessed entire city blocks of my neighborhood swallowed by tear gas for hours. Entire city blocks nowhere near a protest. PPB treated tear gas like a toy to use every night and they cannot be trusted with it anymore.

It is not effective for crowd dispersing because everyday people can't follow instructions whatsoever when they cant see, cant think, let alone breathe, and are retching in pain/fear. You do understand those are the effects of teargas right? Sure you may or may not be able move to get away, but you cant see where you are even going, you cant hear further police instructions over the crowd's screams of agony and fear, and I dare you to try to orient yourself when you are retching in pain, cant see, and cant breathe. Seriously, try to follow any dispersal instructions under those conditions, it is a joke that this technique would ever work for crowd dispersal, it literally disables your basic functioning and causes the most severe pain.

I experienced this firsthand and didn't know what was even happening it was so painful confusing and foreign to me. I was just walking through my own neighborhood, coming home from work, not even a part of a protest at the time. What ensues is not crowd dispersal but dangerous chaos, complete confusion, total fear, and screams of agony, and trauma that impacts for years. Imagine being teargassed by your city's police at age 15 simply because you attended a protest, how would that impact your perception of law enforcement? PPB tactics have very directly damaged community trust and it is time to rebuild that trust with newer, more

modern and humane tactics. The damage from this teargas abuse is still rippling through our community and I have lost many nights sleep and suffered so much distress from the indiscriminate use of teargas as well as impact munitions in crowd control settings.