

Testimony in support of SB 915

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the Committee:

I am submitting testimony in support of SB 915 on behalf of the over 100,000 registered Democrats in Lane County.

On February 16, 2023, the Democratic Party of Lane County (DPLC) passed [Resolution 2023.2](#), "*Relating to Officer Use-of-Deadly-Force Incidents.*" The Resolution supported Senate Bills 236, 237 and 915. As you know, SB-236 and SB-237 did not make it to a public hearing. However, the DPLC continues to support SB-915.

The [current platform](#) of the DPLC, passed in 2022, calls for a just society "*Where laws and public institutions are fair to all, and show respect for each person's worth, dignity, opinions, and rights, and ensure that no one is above the law*"; and also calls for police reform that includes "*Monitor how police use force and proactively hold officers accountable for excessive force.*"

DPLC Resolution 2023.2 also notes that homicide incidents *involving* Lane County officers ("Officer-Involved-Shootings") are *investigated* by Lane County officers via IDFIT (Interagency Deadly Force Investigation Team), but other types of lesser alleged officer misconduct (such as DUI) are referred *outside* of the County for investigation.

The DPLC supports SB-915 as currently written because it enables investigations of homicide incidents, stemming from law enforcement use-of-force, to be conducted by officials *outside* of the County where the incident occurred, thus decreasing the potential for bias and the appearance of a conflict of interest. SB-915 calls for the creation of a new unit, the Deadly Force Prosecutions Unit, within the Department of Justice to investigate (and prosecute if warranted) homicide incidents stemming from law enforcement use of force. This new Unit would specialize in the investigation and prosecution of cases involving law enforcement use of force that result in death. The DPLC supports this separation of the people who *conduct* the investigation from the people who are *under* investigation because it would increase public confidence in the impartiality, accuracy, and completeness of the inquiry. When investigations and prosecuting decisions are made within the same County where the incident occurred, there is too much potential for bias and conflict of interest, which erodes public trust that officers would be held accountable if warranted. Thus the DPLC supports SB 915 and urges the Committee to vote to move it forward.

Submitted by Charlie Swanson, Chair of the Platform Committee of the Democratic Party of Lane County