

Submitter: Shiloh Phelps
On Behalf Of: Myself
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure: SB915

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

I first want to thank you for the opportunity to submit both verbal and written testimony.

I am testifying on behalf of myself, Shiloh Phelps. I am the mother of Bodhi Phelps, who was killed by Gresham Police Officers, Gavin Sasser and Kevin Carlson. I am also the Co-Founder for Pacific Northwest Family Circle. PNWFC is a nonprofit organization run by volunteers that advocate and support families who have been affected by injustices caused by Policing.

I support SB 915. I believe that shifting the responsibility from the county level to the Department of Justice will create unbiased investigations, produce much needed transparency and strengthen public confidence in the legal system and with police officers.

Currently, the District Attorney is responsible for these investigations. However, because of the type of relationship between the district attorneys and police officers this has created a real conflict of interest. As we know District attorneys currently rely on police officers to make the arrests, to gather evidence and testify. In return the police officer rely on the District Attorney to secure convictions out of their arrests. Because DA and officers work closely together to accomplish these tasks it is unfair for anyone to believe that the DA is able to remain unbiased during these types of investigations. The relationship needs to remain strong between the two for obvious reasons. Shifting the responsibility to the Department of Justice would allow that to continue.

SB 915 will also produce much needed transparency. My son's investigation was done by neighboring police departments, fellow officers and the District Attorney office in Multnomah county. During my son's grand jury the District Attorney called only the witnesses of his choice and brought forward only the evidence he felt was important. This limited the information that jurors had and ultimately cleared officers of any wrongdoing. This was not only frustrating, but extremely unfair. We had no idea this was how the grand jury was run and depended solely on this process to understand what happened the night my son was killed. Had the District attorney brought forward all of the information and been completely transparent we could have had a different outcome. Once this investigation was over we were told that there

was nothing that we could and the District attorney had been fair during this investigation. Ultimately the system that we believed in failed us. This has happened to families in Oregon time and time again.

According to the website Mapping police violence from January 2013 through today, there have been 175 police-related deaths and no officers have been charged or convicted. Because of this, community members have become frustrated with the system that has continually failed them. Shifting the responsibility to the Department of justice will strengthen the confidence that Oregon residents have with the court system, and the bonds with officers.

Investigations that are unbiased with transparency can only strengthen community relationships with policing. Shifting the responsibility to the dept of justice is a step in the right direction. So again I support Senate bill 915 and believe this is a good start in police reform for Oregon and would hope it doesn't stop here.

Thank you for your time today and I appreciate the work done on senate bill 915.

Sincerely,

Shiloh Phelps
Mother of Bodhi Phelps
Co-founder of PNWFC