

Submitter: Christie Mayer  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Rules  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB238

10 June 2025?

Re: Opposition to Senate Bill 238: Expansion of Police Drone Authority

Dear Chair and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am writing as a concerned Oregonian to urge you to oppose Senate Bill 238. This bill would significantly expand the circumstances under which law enforcement may operate drones, and in doing so, would erode privacy protections, degrade public trust, and undermine the character of our communities.

While I understand the importance of modern tools in policing, SB 238 abandons core safeguards that once ensured drones were used sparingly and with judicial oversight. The previous law rightly required a warrant or clear probable cause and exigent circumstances before a drone could be used. SB 238 removes those protections and instead authorizes drone use for a sweeping array of everyday police activities including “any call for service,” “training,” and other routine operations. This effectively sanctions unregulated aerial surveillance without meaningful limits or oversight. The result will be a chilling effect on civil liberties. The prospect of drones hovering over neighborhoods, without warrants and with limited consent, is troubling. This shift from targeted use to broad deployment moves us toward a surveillance state where the default is government observation rather than personal privacy.

Beyond the privacy concerns, this bill threatens the quality of life in our communities. The visual and psychological impact of police drones flying overhead (in parks, near schools, above homes) is not benign. It introduces a sense of unease and surveillance into daily life, undermining the sense of trust and calm that neighborhoods need to thrive. Also, SB 238 repeals prior statutes that governed reporting, transparency, and data retention, removing accountability rather than reinforcing it. We should be strengthening safeguards around emerging technologies, not rolling them back.

I respectfully urge this committee and the full Senate to reconsider this bill. Law enforcement can and should have access to tools that help keep the public safe, but those tools must be balanced against the fundamental rights of the people they serve. SB 238 tips that balance too far in the direction of unchecked surveillance and should be rejected.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to the people of Oregon.

Sincerely,  
Christie Mayer