



**Urban League  
of Portland**

Chair Prozanski and Members of the Judiciary Committee: My name is Midge Purcell and I am Director of Advocacy and Public Policy with the Urban League of Portland. We are also members of the Albina Ministerial Alliance on Police Reform and Accountability. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on an issue that is of critical importance to our community and to effective law enforcement in the state.

Profiling remains a troubling nationwide problem. African Americans have been subject to racial profiling from the earliest days of our State. Black men and women traveling through predominantly white neighborhoods were stopped and questioned for no reason — simply because police officers felt they didn't belong there.

In Portland, we live in a city that is 6.4% Black, 78.8% White, yet 23% of those subjected to deadly force, 15% of those pulled over for traffic stops, and 25% of those stopped as pedestrians are Black People; the percentage of Black People searched is double the rate of their White counterparts. This is despite that fact that black suspects were no more likely to actually have drugs or illegal weapons in their cars than white suspects.

In recent years, profiling has extended to new targets. As a result of anti-terrorist measures American citizens and legal residents of Arab and South Asian descent have been stopped, questioned, arbitrarily detained and subjected to unfair police scrutiny; and Latino immigrants — or rather those perceived to be immigrants — are facing this discrimination on an unprecedented scale.

Profiling is one of the major contributors to the disproportionate numbers of our adults and youth who are incarcerated in Oregon. African Americans comprised 18 % of the state's youth population but 57 % percent of youth arrested. More than 60% of the people in prison are now racial and ethnic minorities.

It is time that we have a bipartisan approach to put an end to profiling. It is not effective in making our communities safer. Racial profiling policies set up law enforcement agencies as enemies of entire communities--communities that tend to be disproportionately affected by crime--when law enforcement agencies should be in the business of/protecting/ crime victims and helping them find justice; and it prevents those communities from working with law enforcement.

This has been accepted by political leaders of both parties. Even former president Bush said:

"In so doing we will not hinder the work of our nation's brave police officers. But by stopping the abuses of a few, we will add to the public confidence our police officers earn and deserve. The more that we're working with local law enforcement to improve policing techniques so that we're eliminating potential bias, the safer everybody is going to be."

Some progress has been made within Portland through campaigns to ensure that Portland Police Bureau's collects data on traffic and pedestrian stops. Recently proposed reforms by the Department of Justice will hopefully help further that progress. SB 560 ensures that good practice to End Profiling is standard across the state. Having public, written policies and procedures banning profiling based on stereotypes and unreliable assumptions; robust training programs to prevent profiling; and investigation and action on complaints will help restore confidence in law enforcement and make our communities safer for everyone.