**Urban League
of Portland**

Barker

Chair _____ 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. 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. Ferguson, Cleveland, Philadelphia are just among the latest to be told that some law enforcement agencies are not meeting the standards expected to equally protect and serve all its citizens. African Americans have been subject to racial profiling from the earliest days of our State. Black men and women were stopped and questioned for no reason — simply because police officers felt they didn't belong in a particular neighborhood or drove a car that appeared to be too expensive.

The War on Drugs from the 1980's onward made every black person, especially a young black person a suspect. (Not hyperbole – most black people –men have experience of being stopped regardless of age or accomplishments). Today, one of the most distressing aspects of routine profiling is that young people expect to be stopped, are resigned to being searched, told to empty backpacks, followed in shops and pulled over without just cause. What do you imagine this does to their self-esteem and the sense that they are valued citizens with a contribution to make to our society.

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 Oregonians; the percentage of Black People searched is 3 times 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.

Profiling is one of the major contributors to the disproportionate numbers of our adults and youth who are incarcerated in Oregon. And it is also almost always the precursor to incidents of excessive use of force; many incidents of deadly force began with profiling – perhaps unintentionally escalate into tragic circumstances for the victim, community and law enforcement officer involved.

This bill goes beyond racial profiling to include ethnicity, housing status, religion, sexual orientation and mental disability. In recent years, profiling has effected additional populations. Residents of Arab and Muslim descent are more frequently stopped, and arbitrarily questioned; and Latino immigrants — or rather those perceived to be immigrants — also face profiling about their assumed immigration status. And we know from the recent Department of Justice intervention in Portland that people with mental illness, who are also often homeless, have been adversely impacted by profiling and other practices that the DOJ have been identified for immediate improvements and reform.

Profiling practices fosters distrust of law enforcement and disengagement among communities that tend to be disproportionately affected by crime; unfortunately it is the very reason why those communities are least likely to work with law enforcement.

It is time that we work together to put an end to profiling. We are one of only 8 states that do not have a standard definition of profiling. This bill is part of a package that defines profiling and ensures that

good practice to End Profiling is standard across the state. It sets up a complaint system that protects the officer and complainant, and sets up a system of accountability that will build trust in our law enforcement system across the state. Every Oregonian should feel safe and respected. Unfortunately in our society, bias is a common social condition. 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.