



OREGON COALITION OF POLICE & SHERIFFS

March 14, 2017

Senator Floyd Prozanski
Oregon State Capitol, S-415
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Senate Bill 519 – OPPOSE

Senator Prozanski,

On behalf of the Oregon Coalition of Police and Sheriffs (ORCOPS) and over 2,000 member officers and deputies around the State of Oregon, I am writing to let you know of our opposition to Senate Bill 519, which permits the use of polygraphs for pre-employment screening of law enforcement officers.

Pre-employment screening is a vital part of hiring law enforcement officers. But allowing the replacement of time-tested investigations with a polygraph machine is a troubling step.

Among a number of scholarly articles critical of the use of polygraphs for screening purposes, the National Academies of Science Engineering and Medicine released a report in 2003 that summed up the public's overconfidence in polygraph results thusly:

“Although there is growing pressure from some constituencies to expand the use of polygraph testing in forensic and other public contexts, it would be far wiser for law enforcement and security agencies to minimize use of the tests and to find strategies for reducing threats to public safety and national security that rely as little as possible on the polygraph.” (1)

These concerns have kept the polygraph out of use in Oregon's courtrooms, and ought to likewise keep the polygraph out of use as a pre-employment screening device. Allowance would very easily give way to an unearned confidence in the machine's abilities, causing some departments to undoubtedly forgo proper screenings.

ORCOPS opposes SB 519 as it is currently written. Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Respectfully,

Daryl Turner
President, Oregon Coalition of Police and Sheriffs

Cc: Rep. Holvey
Rep. Lively
Senate Committee on Judiciary

(1) *The Limits of the Polygraph*, Faigman Fienberg & Stern, Issues in Science and Technology, Fall 2003.