

To whom it may concern,

My name is Olivia Pace. I was born and raised in Portland, Oregon. I am a Black, biracial woman. I'm a fifth year student at Portland State University set to graduate in June. I'm a Child and Family studies student and a child care worker. I am currently a senator in the PSU student government, and for four of my five years at PSU I have been a member of the Portland State University Student Union. I began organizing with the student union three days before the Board of Trustees voted to implement armed and deputized campus police and have not looked back since. I have been involved with the campaign #DisarmPSU for four years now. My testimony relates to House Bill 3338.

As a student, a student worker, a member of student government, and a long time activist at my university I know that the students, staff and faculty are the ones who build our university from the ground up. They do research, teach the students, watch the children of students staff and faculty, serve the food, and clean the buildings. They live, learn and work on our campus. It is our home. Despite this, students, staff and faculty have not been the ones empowered to make the very serious decisions around our campus public safety and police. Those who have been empowered to make these decisions are our Board of Trustees. The board is not democratically elected, and further, do not do any work to engage student, staff and faculty voice in their process outside of their basic requirements such as open comment. In fact, the board of trustees did not even include information from public testimony in their meeting minutes until students pushed them to around a year after armament. The board does not, has not and will not represent us. Students, staff and faculty have been pushing back against armed campus police en masse since 2013 — the board completely failed in taking these concerns seriously until campus police murdered Jason Washington, a completely innocent Black man, and veteran, on June 29th of last

year. We told them this would happen, in 2013, 14, 15, 16 and 17. It took somebody actually losing their life for them to begin to listen.

The few mechanisms which were put in place in order to make the implementation just and safe in any conceivable way have been made completely toothless. The university did not use any of the recommendations from the initial implementation committee. The campus security oversight committee has been systematically disempowered. Since the murder of Jason Washington, members of the student union have tired of waiting for the university to make things right, and on March 7th of this year, we presented a counter proposal to armed campus police to our Board of Trustees during a review of the recently released report from the third party consultant Margolis Healy, who wrongly suggested . I'd like to share some of our insights and proposals from this report.

“We demand Portland State University Campus Public Safety Officers (CPSO) both disarm and entirely get rid of sworn and deputized CPSO officers. In this proposal all policing powers of CPSO will be removed. We also demand all CPSO officers remain completely unarmed, including “less lethal” weapons such as tasers and pepper spray. This proposal would most closely resemble the alternative provided by Margolis Healy entitled “return to a department staffed exclusively with non-sworn campus safety officers”. As Margolis Healy presented in their report, this would mean “all incidents that require a criminal investigation, subject to a renegotiated memorandum of understanding, the University would rely on Portland Police Bureau (PPB).” We recognize the function and actions of PPB cause concern for many community members. We also recognize this concern stems from the inherent functions of policing as a violent institution designed to protect private property and regulate public space.

Increased police presence, whether campus police or city police, decreases safety for marginalized individuals, especially Black and Brown people. That said, we ask PSU to NOT contract with a private security firm, OHSU, PPB, etc to replace PSU campus police with “different” police. We are asking for reduction of policing on our campus and for Portland State University and the Board of Trustees to look towards non-police alternatives.

With that said, we ask PSU and the Board of Trustees to invest in and support existing non-police alternatives. Some examples include the bystander intervention workshops hosted by Illuminate, a sexual violence prevention program and the community de-escalation trainings hosted by Student United for Nonviolence, based in the Conflict Resolution department. Of course, these community-based alternatives must only be the beginning. We urge the university to look towards non-police first response programs. For one, PSU can look into hiring outreach workers to respond to calls that CPSO would normally respond, especially calls regarding houseless people on campus. One model, which is currently being considered by the City of Portland, is Crisis Assistance Helping Out on the Streets (CAHOOTS)³. CAHOOTS is a crisis intervention team based in Eugene, Oregon. Response teams consist of a “medic (either a nurse or an EMT) & a crisis worker (who has at least several years experience in the mental health field)”. CAHOOTS responds WITHOUT police or security officers as opposed to responding with police and/or security officers. CAHOOTS has been called the “ best program for the homeless ”⁴ by Eugene Weekly.

Furthermore, we recommend the Board of Trustees to look towards the Compassionate Change District⁵ (CCD) proposal created by Right 2 Survive in coalition with several community organizations. The Compassionate Change District was created in response to a

proposed Enhanced Service District by the Central Eastside Industrial Council (CEIC). The initial proposal by the CEIC heavily emphasized policing and security as a response to homelessness and “livability” issues in the neighborhood. The CEIC has made firm promises to adapt multiple parts of the CCD proposal, including creating a safe encampment site, modifications to their security program to make it more outreach oriented rather than punitive, peer-run trash removal service, and increased access to hygiene facilities that are peer-ran. The collaboration and innovative solutions created by the CCD can be used as a model on how to build a campus public safety plan which is overseen and led by those most impacted.

Much was said in the Margolis Healy report about oversight of CPSO. They acknowledged the campus community demands a significant increase in oversight of CPSO. Further, Margolis Healy states that the University Public Safety Oversight Committee (UPSOC) failed in its task to effectively oversee CPSO’s activities. Margolis Healy says it “does not appear the committee currently has the appropriate authority or structure to enforce the wide-ranging mandates under its purview.” Since this issue is structural, we recommend that the UPSOC, as it exists currently, be scrapped in favor of a democratically elected oversight board that can perform this job effectively. This oversight board should be led by students and faculty and should center the perspectives of marginalized communities. This oversight board must have power over campus safety policy and hiring/firing of safety officials. The campus community cannot be safe until campus safety is a responsibility shared by students, staff, and faculty.”

I assure you that the students staff and faculty who have been involved in this campaign since 2013 and beyond are more informed on our campus culture, and what it will take to keep our campus safe. We have engaged with our peers, we have attended every board meeting for

years, we have done our research, we have protested, we have gone through proper channels, and we have presented alternatives. The university refuses to listen to us, so we are relying on you, our legislators, to listen to us. I urge you to continue forward with the process of passing House Bill 3338.