

4/2/2019

To: Members of the House Judiciary Committee; Representative, Jennifer Williamson, Chair; Representative Chris Gorsek, Vice-Chair; Representative Sherrie Sprenger, Vice Chair

Re: HB 3224 - Support

Chair Williamson, Vice Chairs Sprenger and Gorsek, and members of the House Judiciary Committee:

Our names are Madeline Carroll and Oriana Magnera, and we are representatives of the Black Lives Matter action group, a subset of Showing Up for Racial Justice Portland. We are a coalition of white people fighting for racial justice, especially as it intersects with the criminal legal system. We support HB 3224 with great conviction.

Part of our organizing work as SURJ volunteers includes a campaign for local district attorney accountability, and we cannot achieve this without strong state-level policies. HB 3224 is a step in the right direction. It creates avenues for necessary transparency into district attorney policies and procedures.

District attorneys hold a significant amount of power to dictate charging and sentencing, provide information and services for victims, and drastically affect lives on all sides of a case. But the inner workings and decision-making methodology of their offices are obscure. This lack of clarity makes it difficult to make determinations about how race factors into outcomes, despite some startling statistics:

- For every 1000 black residents in Oregon, 21 are in prison; they make up 9% of the state's prison population, but only 1.8% of total state population.
- Of 367 known cases of death by police in Oregon over the last 20 years, not one officer was indicted by a grand jury. The victims' families remain in the dark as to why, leading to deep distrust for DAs in the community.

We cannot change these patterns, nor achieve positive and effective alternatives to incarceration, without a baseline understanding of the basic functionality for district attorney offices.

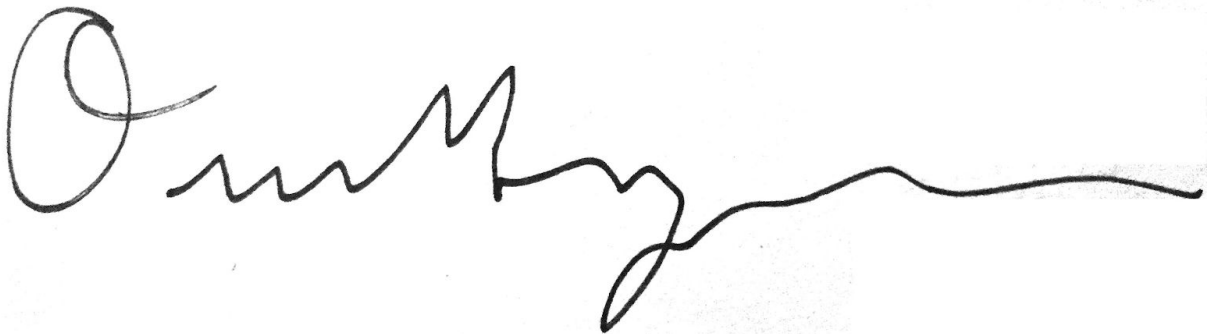
A lack of transparency can lead to biased outcomes, confusion for victims and defendants, and prosecutorial decisions that can be out of line with the community's values. HB 3224 can help provide that transparency through formal, written office

policies for all district attorneys. The bill requires that district attorney offices develop policies around critical functions, such as which prosecutors are qualified to handle which cases, how to charge certain crimes, what approach to use for plea bargains, civil compromise, and diversion programs, and how to best engage victims.

We need change in our criminal legal system, and the first building block toward more equitable and less punitive policies is transparency around how prosecution works. The SURJ PDX Black Lives Matter Action Group urges the Committee to endorse HB 3224 with a “do pass” recommendation. This is a valuable and critical step to ensuring that our fundamental rights apply to all Oregonians.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written comments.

Respectfully,

A large, fluid handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Oriana Magnera'.

Oriana Magnera

A smaller, more compact handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Madeline Carroll'.

Madeline Carroll

Black Lives Matter, Showing Up for Racial Justice Portland