



**Testimony of Ricardo Lujan-Valerio, Policy Associate
In Support of SB 424
House Committee on Judiciary
April 18, 2019**

Chair Williamson and Members of the Committee:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon¹ supports SB 424, which would require a law enforcement agency to establish a mental health wellness policy for addressing issues related to mental health wellness of law enforcement officers employed by the agency.

By establishing a mental health wellness policy, law enforcement officers will receive better support when navigating a high-level stress environment. Law enforcement officers are trained to work in a unique environment that can often be dangerous and emotionally exhausting. On many occasions they bear witness to the personal loss and misfortune of everyday citizens. Continuous exposure to these kinds of incidents can lead to heightened anxiety, nervousness, PTSD, and depression. A study from the OACP/OSSA task force (with a 90% response rate) showed that 35 % of agencies in Oregon do not have official policies in place that address mental wellbeing and wellness.

SB 424 will require law enforcement agencies to establish policies that would address these sensitive situations in an appropriate manner. Mental wellbeing policies are a proactive approach to ensuring that the right measures are being taken to protect our law enforcement officials from emotional and mental burnout. This type of approach will allow community members to have better interactions with their police officers.

We commend Senator Frederick for convening a group of stakeholders that shaped the creation of SB 424. For these reasons, the ACLU of Oregon urges you to support SB 424. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

¹ The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to preservation and enhancement of civil liberties and civil rights, with more than 45,000 members and supporters statewide.