

Dear Senator Prozanski, members of the committee,

My name is Shiloh Wilson-Phelps. I helped co-found Pacific Northwest Family Circle after my son, 22-year-old Bodhi Phelps, was shot by Gresham police 11 times on May 25, 2016, while running away. Witnesses confirm that he was unarmed, although police claim he had two knives.

City of Gresham Officers Gavin Sasser and Kevin Carlson didn't have to kill my son. Someone who is running away is not a threat. There are other ways to subdue a person. But, these officers knew that no matter what they decided to do, they'd be protected by the criminal legal system. They knew they'd be protected by the law (i.e. qualified immunity) and by those with the discretionary power to choose not to pursue action against them (i.e. Multnomah County District Attorney Rod Underhill).

Some might say that my son should have complied with police officers. I would say: nothing my son did that day was so terrible that it should result in his death, especially one decided by judges, jury members, and executioners made up entirely of police officers presiding over a trial that started and concluded within just seconds of their arrival.

Our family pursued action against Officers Sasser and Carlson, but we lost the appeal due to qualified immunity. The legal process is too draining – both financially and emotionally. We are done.

What we are not done with is the pain. The pain of losing a child is unbearable. Now imagine losing your child to murder. Now imagine your child was killed by police. These pains multiply exponentially, each one stacking on the other, as I and other Mothers across the country shoulder the burden of the "occasional" police murder so that others can have the illusion of safety.

We Mothers... we cannot rest for very long. We cannot sleep. We cannot bear that another family is going what we go through every single day in this country. Time doesn't pass. The pain never eases. We just learn new ways to deal with it, like channeling it into getting justice.

Bodhi was murdered for the convenience of the officers. As Senator Manning has so aptly pointed out, fire fighters are afraid for their lives every time they rush into a burning building. Being afraid for your life is part of the job of police officers. Those officers that murder unarmed people in cold blood and then lie about it later should be held accountable for their decisions and actions. Instead, the officers that killed my Bodhi received a medal of valor for his bravery. Both officers continue to work in their previous positions.

Until police are held accountable for these murders, they will continue to kill.

I support House Bill 613 with some suggestions:

- On page 1, line 9: "promptly" needs to be carefully defined. Families and government alike struggle tremendously with not receiving information in a timely fashion from police. Suggest changing this to "within two business days".
- On page 1, line 10: add "and the victims of police misconduct and the family of community members killed by police" after "the Department of Public Safety Standard and Training. This would help ensure that victims and families receive information about cases in a timely fashion. Add this again on page 2, line 25.

I fully support House Bill 621 to allow Portland to establish a community oversight board so that we can finally hold police accountable. Even though this wouldn't have helped in my Bodhi's case in Gresham, this legislation provides a legal pathway for cities across Oregon to develop a community-led police oversight system that's right for them.

Sincerely,
Shiloh Wilson-Phelps
Mother, 22-year-old Loved One Bodhi Phelps
Co-Founder of Pacific Northwest Family Circle
www.pnwfamilycircle.org