



March 9th, 2021

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: SB 621, Upholding Establishment of Local Law Enforcement Oversight Board

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and members of the committee,

My name is Andrea Valderrama, and I am here representing the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon). We are a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of civil liberties and civil rights, with more than 28,415 members statewide. We are here in support of SB 621.

Portland City Council, led by Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, referred a measure to Portland voters creating a Civilian Police Oversight Board. The board creates police accountability with autonomy from the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) and City Council, a required source of stable funding to conduct complete and independent investigations, subpoena power and access to internal department records, and legal authority to produce enforceable actions. On November 3rd, measure 26-217 overwhelmingly passed, with 81.58% of voters voting in favor.

The measure is a timely and innovative response to the crisis in confidence we have with police accountability in Portland. According to an OPB article published just last month, “Portland police arrest Black people at a per capita rate 4.3 times higher than white people, the fifth worst in the country. Officers in Portland also kill Black people 3.9 times more than white people, according to data from Campaign Zero, a group devoted to reducing police violence.”¹ We are especially concerned about the recent false accusations against Commissioner Hardesty and PPB’s involvement in leaking those claims.² Now is the time to address both the history of systemic police abuses of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) and people with mental health disabilities³, and the Portland Police’s headline-grabbing mistreatment of both non-violent protesters and historically marginalized groups. Under the current system, officer discipline and prosecution is virtually non-existent.

Olugbenga Ajilore, senior economist at the Center for American Progress, identified three keys to the success of any oversight board: It must be independent from local law enforcement agencies; it must have the authority to discipline officers; and it must have sufficient resources to be effective.

1

<https://www.opb.org/article/2021/02/07/portland-has-5th-worst-arrest-disparities-in-the-nation-according-to-data/>

2

<https://www.kgw.com/article/news/local/false-allegations-made-against-portland-city-commissioner/283-feabcd9d-9c7c-4f26-a760-f963d224e0d4>

³ <https://www.portlandmercury.com/opinion/2019/12/19/27663999/hall-monitor-blame-game>



SB 621 puts into practice verbal commitments made to rethink and reimagine public safety. In addition, it is the duty of elected officials to carry out the will of the voters, and the voters have spoken loud and clear. **The ACLU of Oregon urges you to support SB 621.**

Thank you,

Andrea Valderrama, Policy Director
ACLU of Oregon