

As things currently stand, police officers enjoy far too much protection and privilege. This first needs to be addressed - there is no reason for a public employee to have this much power and lack of accountability. In fact, the state of Oregon should absolutely be working to reduce the scope of policing, moving funds from police budgets to social services such as housing, health and human services, with the leadership of community members who know their own needs. Attempting to reform and regulate policing is only futile if we don't scale back the disproportionate amount of funding it receives. When many of our community members are criminalized for attempting to survive poverty, or living with mental illness, it makes absolutely no sense to continue to overinflate and over-empower law enforcement. Our funds must be divested from policing and prosecution and immediately redirected to housing, feeding, and treating all of our community members, and when that happens, we may find law enforcement somewhat obsolete - based on the historical fact that policing emerged for the first time from the industrial revolution, when many people suddenly found themselves in poverty. Workers and community members would seek the resources they needed to survive, or organize to demand better conditions, and the police were introduced as a force to criminalize these acts of self-preservation. In the US, we also know that the police served as Slave Patrol. Poverty and exploitation and policing are all mutually reinforcing. When we eliminate poverty and labor exploitation, we may also find that the police are not as needed as we have been lead to believe, and that community-based systems of safety and accountability are completely possible and much, much more effective.