

To the members of the Joint Ways and Means Committee:

Our state budget is a chance for us to speak up as a state about our values. Like most people, I've been paying attention to the epidemic of police violence that has been escalating for years and most gravely impacting our Black neighbors. The scenes of violence are too much to bear. This is not a problem unique to Oregon, but it is a problem Oregon can be unique in solving.

I've come to believe, through witnessing not only the extrajudicial killings but the response to people protesting those killings (not to mention the completely different response given to white supremacist militia members coming to Portland as a testing ground for an insurrection against America), that the right thing to do is to find ways of keeping each other safe that don't rely on policing. Just this week we lost another person in our city to a police shooting, a person who might have been helped by someone trained to deal with mental health crises.

I've also come to believe, through following the work of Black organizers in our community and elsewhere, that abolition of police is not only possible, but vastly preferable to our current system. Incremental reforms can't reach the racism at the root of this problem, and in the absence of any accountability, our police forces are able to act more as rogue paramilitary operations. I'm scared to think what will happen if this system is allowed to keep perpetuating itself.

Please, for the safety of our state and everyone in it, do the right thing- move money out of policing and into targeted, community-based solutions for public safety. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Liz Hardee
Portland