

I am a resident of SE Portland writing in strong support of HB 2932 to develop a statewide database reporting the use of physical force by police and corrections officers. Such an independent database is critical to confront the severity of the officer use of force problem we face both in Portland and across the state. Portland Police Bureau’s own system of reporting, for example, vastly undercounts the actual incidents of force. In the protests against police violence and racism this year, Portland police reported using force, including rubber bullets, baton strikes, tear gas, and more against protestors more than 6,000 times.¹ The use of force incidents, represented by quarter below, are underestimated by scores, because the number of incidents were not reported, but only the *types* of uses of force *by officer per quarter*.²

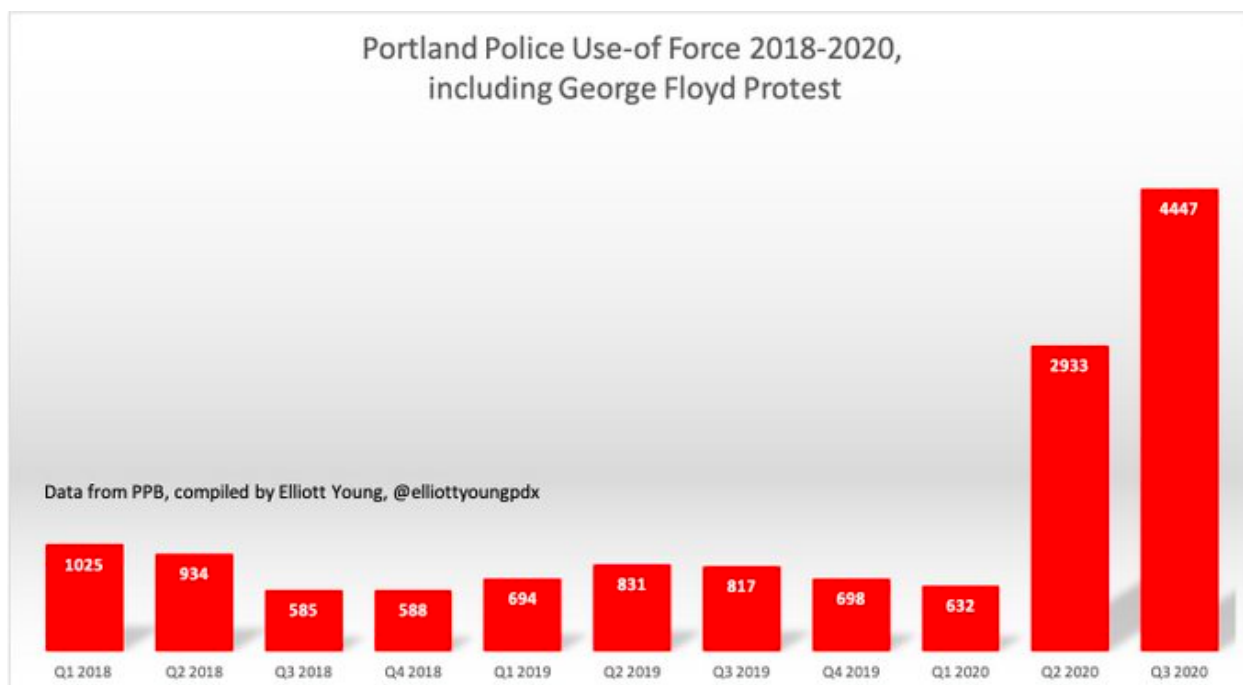


Figure 1. Graph Representing PPB’s Own Reported Use of Force By Quarter,

<https://twitter.com/elliottyoungpdx/status/1329129431504285697?s=20>

During testimony today, I was alarmed by the pushback against the simple premise that police violence and threats of violence should be documented and the individual officers should

¹ Alex Zielinski, *Portland Police Have Used Force Against Protesters More Than 6,000 Times in 2020*, Nov. 16, 2020 at 3:20 pm, PORTLAND MERCURY, <https://www.portlandmercury.com/blogtown/2020/11/16/30491633/portland-police-have-used-force-against-protesters-more-than-6000-times-in-2020>.

² See *PPB Force Analysis Summary Report: Q3 2020, July 01 - September 30, 2020 (Nov. 2020)* at 18, <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/police/article/778387> (“This is the total number of unique officers who reported FDCR-level force during the quarter. Officers may have used force in more than one incident, but are *only counted once* in this figure.”)

made accountable simply by being named. To use the sacred words of James Baldwin, “[n]ot everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.” I was disappointed to hear that the majority of testimony against this bill essentially boiled down to the preference that such force not be independently and thoroughly documented, and that the FBI reporting is sufficient.

Rep. Noble voiced a concern that officers who threaten force as a de-escalation technique will be punished by such reporting. The example he gave is threatening to use a taser so that subjects comply with orders. This example perfectly represents our society’s sickness, and the ways we normalize police violence against our community members, often when they are in crisis. Under any other circumstance, shouting a threat of violence to command obedience would not be considered de-escalation. It is a societal sickness that we believe such a behavior is a successful means to promote “law and order,” because the alternative we have come to expect when anyone steps out of line is violence, maiming, or death. Threatening commandments should absolutely be included in such reports, just as such incidents would for any other professional.

Further, as was discussed in the hearing, simply documenting such behavior is not punishment. It is a tool for officers to improve and for the community to feel safe knowing that if they are hurt by an agent of the state, this hurt will be documented and addressed. As it stands now, Portland community members often have no way to discover even the badge number of their assaulter, let alone have a means of addressing the harm done.

HB 2932 takes a critical step toward community safety and the accountability we must all have in addressing systemic violence and racism. Thank you for your consideration.