

**Subject:** Police Reform Bill to Protect Minors

**Date:** Monday, July 27, 2020 at 5:20:56 PM Pacific Daylight Time

**From:** Bridget Saladino

**To:** Sen Dembrow, Rep KenyGuyer

Dear Senator Dembrow and Representative Kenny-Guyer,

Thank you for taking a moment to consider the following request. I worked in politics about a decade ago and have met you both on a handful of occasions, and my interactions with you give me confidence that you will hear me with open minds and hearts, and with a desire to help others in the future who may find themselves in a situation similar to mine. My request comes from a personal story, as most do.

Last week, my 14-yr-old daughter went to a friend's house with another two friends (4 kids together, two boys and two girls). That night, my daughter was a witness to an alleged drugging and sexual assault of her friend, and that mother filed a police report. I made it clear to her that my daughter and I would do whatever we could to be helpful to the investigation and to her family. She gave our names and numbers to the police, which I knew about.

Twenty-four hours later, a police officer called my 14-yr-old daughter at 10pm at night on her personal cell phone cell and questioned her for 20 minutes without once asking her if she had a parent available to also be on the call. Neither did they attempt to contact me first. Because my daughter was not under arrest for anything, does that mean she has fewer rights than the accused? She was not informed by the police that she did not have to speak with them if she wasn't comfortable doing so, or that she could call back after talking with a parent. They told her nothing about her rights or about the options she had as an individual, and there was no one involved in that call representing what would be best for her as a child. The officer simply pursued her own goals and objections without considering who she was questioning or, apparently, what protections she would want for her own child in a similar situation.

I was in the next room when this was happening, unaware of what was taking place, and my daughter came out as soon as she got off the phone. She was shaking and pale and looked like a deer in headlights, and she said "the police just called me and talked to me..."

I called the officer (Laura Fraer) back immediately to ask her what she had been thinking. Did she realize she was questioning a young minor whose parent was not present and had not even been notified? Did she care? Is such a practice legal? She informed me that it is. Was it the right thing to do? I asked. Would she want the same to happen to her young child? She admitted that she wouldn't want the same to happen to her child. As I questioned her, she sounded more like a victim than someone who was apologetic over causing harm to a minor witness. I then spoke with her boss, whose name is, I believe, Sergeant Spears.

The Sergeant explained the law, giving a few examples of scenarios where a parent might not be available or might be part of the investigation. In those few scenarios, he explained, it is not possible to get parental consent ahead of time. After 30 minutes on the phone with me, the Sergeant finally agreed that in cases beyond those few scenarios, it was not best practice, not what he would want for his own child, and not the right way to do things. He finally agreed to train his officers around what a best practice should look like. A minor, especially a young minor, should, whenever possible, have a parent present when being questioned by a law enforcement officer, or should receive parental consent prior to questioning.

Why is this not in the law? Why, at the very least, is this best practice not outlined in the Police Bureau's

policies and procedures? How on earth is it acceptable to make direct contact with a young minor by catching them off guard late at night and questioning them without their parent's knowledge? Of course it isn't. This is completely inappropriate and unacceptable, even by the admission of those responsible for these actions. This overreaching of law enforcement, with a concern for their own goals only, is so typical. This is another example of a system of power that views its community members, whom its officers are sworn to protect and serve, as subjects under its control.

There is no reason that the law and/or the Portland Police Bureau's policies and procedures can't be amended in such a way that requires parental presence during, or parental consent to be obtained prior to, the questioning of a minor who is not a suspect (in which case Miranda Rights would be read and the presence of a lawyer advised). Our laws allow for protections of minor suspects. The law must equally protect the rights and mental health of minor witnesses.

Thank you for reading and considering my concerns. I would be very grateful if you would be willing to discuss the matter further with me and sponsor a bill on my behalf. So many Oregonians—and Americans—are calling for police reform at this time, and you could help take steps that will greater ensure the safety of some of the State's most vulnerable citizens: its minor children.

Sincerely,  
Bridget Saladino