

Dear Oregon Senate,

I support the passage of HB 2929-A4. The -A4 amendment will ensure public access to police disciplinary records and protect Oregonians from unchecked police misconduct.

- Access to police disciplinary records is key to policing reform. Lack of transparency perpetuates a culture of secrecy that systematically and pervasively shields police misconduct. The public does not know whether police departments are handling complaints against officers effectively or sweeping them under the rug.
- Oregon is one of 9 states that keeps police misconduct records strictly confidential whether the officers are disciplined or cleared. Judges and juries are unaware if officers who built the cases have a history of lying, coercing witnesses, or other transgressions — even in cases with life-altering consequences.
- Potential for wrongful convictions. Innocent defendants are at risk of being wrongly convicted by officers who have histories of lying, coercion and other misconduct. That is because officer disciplinary records are largely inaccessible to prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, and juries as they assess innocence and guilt.
- Lack of transparency in police discipline. Minority and women police officers frequently report their belief that they are singled out and punished more harshly than their white male counterparts. Additionally, every year there are lawsuits filed by these officers claiming hostile work environments where they were the victims of racial and/or gender discrimination -- conduct that is often swept under the rug. Public access to police internal affairs files can expose disparities in discipline and make for a better workplace and build greater public trust in law enforcement.
- Transparency is key to establishing trust between police and the people they serve, which is the bedrock of effective community policing.
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I strongly urge you to support HB 2929-A4 and shine a light on police misconduct.

Regards,

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