

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-chair Thatcher, and members of the committee,

I am writing to urge you to vote yes on HB 2936. Systemic racism is a serious problem in police departments throughout the US and in Oregon. Something must be done to stop the racist abuse of power that police often use against people of color. As a mental health therapist, I work with clients of color who have been traumatized by mistreatment by local police. These abuses of police power result in inter-generational trauma that is difficult to heal from and bears a high cost to society in general in the form of substance abuse, poor educational outcomes, incarceration, and domestic violence, among other things. I urge Oregon to take the lead in police reforms that reduce the damages of systemic racism. The least we can do is run background checks on police officers to verify that they do not have associations with racist or white supremacist organizations and movements. It is our humanitarian duty to treat all humans with dignity, respect, and equality in front of the law. HB 2936 provides a step in this direction.

Sincerely,
Zandra Akerson, CSWA