



Wednesday, January 27, 2021

Testimony in support of HB 2931 and HB 2932

Representative Bynum and Members of the House Judiciary Committee, My name is Patrick O'Herron MD, and I am the board president of Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility. I want to express our support of House Bills 2931 and 2932.

House bill 2931 would require that persons who are arrested receive a medical assessment. As an organization supporting human health and well-being our support of this measure is straightforward. There are clearly instances where a medical assessment of an arrested person could result in life-saving treatment and allow people to receive medical attention rather than dying in a jail cell. Another potential beneficial result of the enactment of this bill would be to remind law enforcement of the humanity of the people being arrested. It would mandate that arresting officers consider the health and therefore humanity of those placed in custody. Any inconvenience that might result in is well worth it if even a single death, such as that of James Chasse could be avoided.

House bill 2932 would establish a use of force database. In 2018 The American Public Health Association released a report on "Addressing Law Enforcement Violence as a Public Health Issue." Their recommendations include the following steps: "(1) eliminate policies and practices that facilitate disproportionate violence against specific populations (including laws criminalizing these populations), (2) institute robust law enforcement accountability measures, (3) increase investment in promoting racial and economic equity to address social determinants of health, (4) implement community-based alternatives to addressing harms and preventing trauma, and (5) *work with public health officials to comprehensively document law enforcement contact, violence, and injuries.*" A robust, public, and searchable database of use of force by police and corrections officers would allow the collection and analysis of data regarding police use of force. If we hope to decrease violence on members of our communities from law enforcement, we need to fully understand the problem. This database would provide key data to understand the problem and adequately address it as well.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick O'Herron".

Patrick O'Herron, MD  
Board President

