

Submitter: Yusuf Arifin  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Rules  
Measure: HB4131

My name is Yusuf Arifin, and I am a junior at Sunset High School in Portland. Two weeks ago, I testified before this committee on the importance of maintaining and expanding protections for protesters. I come to affirm this view and urge committee members to oppose HB 4131-5 and HB 4131-6 but support the amendment language in HB 4131-3.

Previously, I discussed the environmental impacts of tear gas. While these impacts are distressing, I want to highlight the toll on humans. According to a ProPublica investigation, some chemicals in tear gas are known to induce pain. Furthermore, they can degrade peoples' noses, mouths, lungs, and eyes, making us more susceptible to bacteria and other diseases. Multiple studies and authorities have concluded that tear gas can lead to blindness, respiratory failure, heart disease, and death. Oregonians deserve the right to protest without worrying about their health and safety. However, this bill would do just that, potentially leading to hospitalization and alarming long-term effects. Prohibiting police from using weapons of war and tear gas would make these scenarios avoidable.

I'd also like to acknowledge the impact this bill would have on younger generations. We are committed to solving global issues, and the only way we have of speaking out is through protest. Recently, Oregon students have protested in support of environmental justice and racial equity, among other topics. I'm fortunate to say that I've been involved in multiple of these events. Unfortunately, this bill will diminish such protests, telling Oregon students that our voices do not deserve to be heard. HB 4131 provokes fear and apprehension among my peers, as we are not sure if exercising our fundamental rights will result in violence, physical harm, or worse. As the generation that will soon be managing the world, we must have every opportunity to engage in the civic process. Sadly, this bill does precisely the opposite.

Oregonians are counting on this committee to strengthen their right to assemble. If the committee fails to act, we risk chilling protests across the state. I strongly urge all Representatives to oppose HB 4131-5 and HB 4131-6 and support the dash 3 amendment to HB 4131. Thank you.