



Pacific Northwest Family Circle

Peace Not Police

Oregon Chapter of P.O.S.T. Protect Our Stolen Treasures

March 28, 2023

Re: Testimony in support of SB 915

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the Committee:

I am submitting testimony on behalf of the members of Pacific Northwest Family Circle. We are an organization that supports and advocates for families who have been harmed or who have lost loved ones due to police actions. We support SB 915 as originally submitted, plus we advocate for an amendment that would ensure transparency of these investigations and prosecution decisions through accurate and complete data reporting and information release to the public without charge.

We are appreciative of the intent of SB 915 to create a more independent process for investigating homicides committed by police officers as part of their official duties (otherwise known as “officer involved shootings”). As you know, the current situation is governed by SB-111, which was passed 15 years ago and delegated investigations to individual counties, under the authority of a Deadly Force Planning Authority. The Planning Authority for each county consists of six members, four of whom are law enforcement, one is the District Attorney, and the one lone community member is selected by the County District Attorney and/or the County Sheriff. This group, which is charged with developing and approving the rules for deadly physical force investigations in each County, is not a balanced representation of the community. However, using the processes approved by each Planning Authority, each county typically conducts its own homicide investigation for Officer Involved Shootings. The results are then presented to the County District Attorney, who makes the decision whether to convene a Grand Jury or to rule the homicide non-criminal under Oregon law. The problem with this model is that there is too much room for bias, even if unintentional or implicit. Law enforcement members work closely with each other and with the District Attorney’s office within any given County. These close relationships, both work and personal, create a lack of impartiality in any investigation and subsequent prosecution decision.

We believe that moving the investigation and prosecution decisions to a state level office, separate from County authority, would lead to a more fair and unbiased process. SB 915, as

originally written, appears to do this by creating a new unit, the Deadly Force Prosecutions Unit, within the Department of Justice. Moving these investigations to the new Unit would create another layer of separation between the agency that employs the officer involved and the people investigating the homicide. This separation is important to reduce bias and increase impartiality during the investigation and prosecution decision processes.

In addition, once this separate Deadly Force Prosecutions Unit is created, we advocate for a consistent methodology of data collection and reporting on each incident to the public. All records regarding an investigation, including Grand Jury proceedings, should be made publicly available, free-of-charge, once the final prosecution decision is made. A searchable, accurate, up-to-date database should be created by the new Unit that includes all relevant information about each incident. A family should not have to suffer the loss of a loved one due to actions of a state employee and then have to struggle (financially and administratively) to find the records about what happened.

Pacific Northwest Family Circle supports SB 915 as originally submitted, and advocates for an amendment that ensures transparency of these investigations and prosecution decisions from the new Unit.

Sincerely,

April Sabbe

President, Pacific Northwest Family Circle

writing to you from the Stolen Land of the Multnomah, the Chinook, and many other Peoples not named here

This letter is sent In Loving Memory of PNWFC Loved Ones and All Stolen Lives:

19 year-old Christopher Kalonji

22 year-old Bodhi Phelps

25 year-old Chance Thompson

17 year-old Moose Hayes "Quanice"

24 year-old Terrell Johnson

27 year-old Chase Hammer

21 year-old Brad Lee Morgan

27 year-old Daniel Isaac Covarrubias

29 year-old Alex Dold

49 year-old Captain Brian A. Babb
(alive) Andre Thompson
(alive) Bryson Chaplin
44 year-old Deano Case
54 year-old Remi Sabbe
48 year-old John Elifritz
43 year-old Jesse Powell
27 year-old Patrick Kimmons
35 year-old Matthew Burroughs
36 year-old Andre Gladen
20 year-old Giovanni Joseph-McDade
29 year-old Joel Nelson
31 year-old Titi Gulley
16 year-old Brian Guy Dixon
29-year-old Wesley Allen Barbee
40 year-old Elibrio "Eli" Rodrigues
(alive) Melvin Lewis Dillon
(alive) Robert Dillon
25-year-old Keaton Otis
33-year-old Stacy Kenny
42-year-old James Chasse
24-year-old Herbert Hightower Jr.
25-year-old Jesse Sarey
37-year-old Bill Brown
32-year-old Chase Brooks
24-year-old Derrick Clark
26-year-old Jacob Macduff