

Submitter:

Brian Austin

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Judiciary

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

SB1186

I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 1186, which proposes critical updates to Oregon's statutes governing law enforcement use of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), commonly referred to as drones.

As a licensed drone pilot for the Springfield Police Department, I have witnessed firsthand the essential role that drones can play in protecting both the public and officers. Whether locating missing persons, assessing hazardous situations, or supporting tactical operations, UAS provide unmatched situational awareness and rapid deployment capability that often makes the difference in life-or-death moments.

Unfortunately, under current statutory language, our ability to deploy drones is severely limited, even in situations where timely aerial support could dramatically improve outcomes. There have been multiple occasions where I was unable to launch during critical incidents—ranging from search and rescue to active scenes involving threats to public safety—because the law did not allow for rapid use absent a warrant or narrowly defined exigent circumstances.

SB 1186 modernizes and clarifies the law to reflect practical needs in the field, permitting drone use in connection with lawful police activity, including emergency responses, calls for service, and consent-based operations. It maintains safeguards against misuse while allowing agencies to act swiftly when time is of the essence.

I respectfully urge the legislature to pass SB 1186. This bill strikes an appropriate balance between public safety and privacy, and its passage will enable Oregon's law enforcement agencies to better serve and protect our communities.