

Submitter: Michael Norlander
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1186
To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed updates to Oregon Revised Statutes 837.320 and 837.370 as outlined in SB 1186 (soon to be SB 238). These changes are not only timely—they are essential. The expanded language in this bill would significantly improve law enforcement's ability to use drone technology in ways that enhance public safety, protect officers, and save lives.

As a law enforcement officer who has personally deployed drones dozens of times in the field, I can say with confidence that unmanned aerial systems (UAS) are one of the most valuable tools in modern policing. I've seen firsthand how this technology can change the outcome of dangerous situations, provide critical situational awareness, and allow for safer resolutions to incidents that could otherwise escalate.

A key advantage of drone use is the ability to gain a safe, elevated view of active incidents without exposing officers to danger. I've deployed drones during felony traffic stops, suspect searches, and tactical warrant executions. In multiple instances, I've located suspects hiding in places like rooftops and thick brush—locations that would have put officers at risk during traditional searches. These drones helped us take individuals into custody without injury or conflict, reducing the risk for everyone involved.

Beyond officer safety, drone operations also enhance safety for suspects. Being able to locate a subject and observe their behavior before making contact often gives officers the time and information needed to de-escalate. This increased awareness has, in many cases, eliminated the need for any use of force. Drone technology doesn't just improve our tactics—it also supports safer, more responsible policing.

It's equally important to highlight the role of interior drone operations. The ability to use a drone inside a building is a game-changer for officer safety. It allows us to search structures for suspects without first sending in personnel. I've personally deployed an interior drone during a barricaded subject call. The drone located a man armed with a knife inside the building. I relayed that information to officers outside, who adapted their approach and safely took the suspect into custody without anyone being harmed. That situation could have ended very differently without the drone.

SB 1186 provides the clarity and flexibility needed to ensure drones can be lawfully used in a range of critical incidents—calls for service, warrant executions, public

safety emergencies, search and rescue operations, and training. It also supports the use of drones during both interior and exterior operations tied to lawful police activity, allowing us to act faster and more safely in real time.

This bill also supports Drone as First Responder (DFR) programs, which allow drones to be deployed proactively in connection with lawful activity, such as traffic stops or emerging emergencies. These programs give law enforcement a critical time advantage, helping prevent escalation, improve planning, and ultimately save lives.

I strongly encourage support for SB 1186 (or SB 238) as it moves forward. These updates will help agencies across Oregon implement drone programs that are safe, effective, and focused on preserving life—for officers, suspects, and the communities we serve.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to provide further information based on my field experience.

Respectfully,
Michael Norlander
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