



Public Safety Service Area

Stephanie Howard
Director of Community Safety

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Senate Committee on Judiciary
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. HR E
Salem, OR 97209

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee,

As the Director of Community Safety for the City of Portland's Public Safety Service Area, I work closely with the city's public safety bureaus and oversee the city's Office of Violence Prevention, Portland Ceasefire, and Portland Street Response. These programs work directly with communities most impacted by violence, supporting them through what are often the most difficult days of their lives. Through this work, we see firsthand how cycles of poverty, limited opportunities, and historical disinvestment contribute to persistent violence over generations.

Portland and Oregon have experienced notable shifts in community violence trends over the last decade, particularly in relation to violent crime rates. From 2013-2019, Oregon's violent crime rate went up 21%, followed by another 10% increase between 2019-2023. In that same period, the state's murder rate surged 53% and aggravated assaults went up by 23%, more than double the national uptick of 10%.

Portland has been hit particularly hard as it relates to gun-related homicides and shooting incidents, which disproportionately impacts black and brown communities across the city. In 2022, Portland's gun violence rates had risen over 200%. Through collaborative work among law enforcement and community-based efforts like Portland Ceasefire and the Office of Violence Prevention, we have been able to dramatically reduce these rates by nearly 40% over the last three years and implement violence intervention and prevention strategies that are literally saving lives.

But violence does not recognize the boundaries of local governments, and we believe that the State of Oregon has the ability to play a vital role in preventing and coordinating meaningful responses to community violence throughout Oregon. We believe this work should take shape through an Office of Community Violence Prevention which would coordinate, support, and scale efforts to reduce violence across the state, especially in underserved and economically disadvantaged areas.



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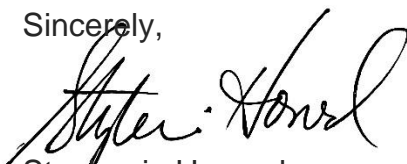
A statewide Office of Community Violence Prevention could:

- Develop a statewide violence prevention framework and align policies and funding across sectors.
- Build local capacity by offering training, technical assistance and toolkits, as well as workforce development for community-based violence intervention specialists, peer support workers, and trauma informed service providers.
- Standardize data collection across jurisdictions to monitor trends, measure impact, and inform policy decisions.
- Host regular convenings and learning collaboratives and creating a centralized hub for best practices, policy recommendations, and program resources.
- Advance policy and systems change by identifying and advocating for legislative and regulatory changes that address root causes of violence and working with state agencies to integrate violence prevention into the broader health equity and economic development strategies.
- Center racial justice, survivor voices, and culturally specific approaches to promote community healing through trauma informed care, restorative justice, and investments in youth, families, and neighborhoods.
- Research federal and philanthropic funding opportunities, coordinating multi-jurisdiction grant applications, and providing state grants to local and tribal governments, nonprofits and community-based organizations, along with working with academic institutions and researchers to evaluate the effectiveness of state supported programs, ensuring continuous learning and improvement.

Although what I am describing is a larger scope and scale of work than is detailed in SB 1015, the grant program laid out in the bill in conjunction with the ongoing work of the Oregon DOJ are crucial pieces of a much-needed robust and effective statewide OVP.

Too many Oregonians have felt the impacts of community violence. We can, however, work to address those harms and prevent others from contributing to or experiencing violence in the future. The grant program created by Senate Bill 1015 presents a meaningful opportunity to strengthen prevention efforts, increase safety, and advance healing in communities disproportionately impacted by violence. For these reasons and more, I encourage your support of SB 1015.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephanie Howard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Stephanie" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Howard".

Stephanie Howard
Director of Community Safety
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