

Testimony in Opposition to SB 238

Submitted to: House Committee on Judiciary

Hearing Date: May 7, 2025

Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Chotzen and Wallan, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Amanda Orozco (she/they), and I am writing today to express my opposition to Senate Bill 238, which significantly expands law enforcement's authority to deploy drones, or unmanned aircraft systems, without adequate oversight or accountability.

As currently drafted, SB 238 would eliminate important privacy protections in Oregon law by repealing ORS 837.330, 837.335, and 837.340. These statutes currently provide critical guardrails, including the requirement that police obtain a warrant or meet specific criteria before using drones. SB 238 replaces these clear limits with vague and expansive language that authorizes drone use for any lawful police activity. This broad standard could include nearly any interaction between police and the public, ranging from general service calls to routine property checks.

The bill also permits drone use in a wide range of scenarios with no requirement for a warrant or judicial oversight. These include calls for service and public safety emergencies, training exercises and search-and-rescue operations, investigations of private property with the owner's consent, execution of warrants, situations involving exigent circumstances, and traffic enforcement when pursuing a fleeing suspect.

This expansion opens the door to unchecked aerial surveillance, especially in communities already over-policed and surveilled, including Black, Indigenous, and Latine communities. The use of drones in these scenarios, without strict judicial oversight or transparency, represents a serious threat to civil liberties and the right to privacy.

Additionally, SB 238 does not impose any meaningful limitations on how data collected by drones can be stored, shared, or used. There is no independent oversight or public reporting required. Without clear accountability measures, communities will have no way of knowing how law enforcement agencies are deploying this powerful surveillance technology or what is being done with the information gathered.

I urge the committee to reject this bill and protect the right to privacy for all Oregonians. We can support public safety without turning our neighborhoods into surveillance zones.

Please vote no on SB 238.

Respectfully,

Amanda Orozco