

Submitter:

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On Behalf Of:

Committee:

House Committee On Judiciary

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

SB238

This bill would be another step that allows the police state to violate 1st and 4th amendment rights. The police don't need more money. They need to DO THEIR JOBS without murdering innocent people, or locking up innocent people. PPB's own data challenges the narrative that more funding means less crime, or that fewer police means more crime.

A 2019 investigation by The Marshall Project found the number of U.S. police per 100,000 residents dropped by 10% between 1997 and 2016. Throughout that time, the number of violent crimes per 100,000 residents dropped by 37%, according to FBI data. Despite the drop in crime, leaders throughout the country began sounding the alarm about decreased police staffing, leading to a new push to elevate and maintain police force sizes, The Marshall Project found.

Police do not prevent crime, nor is it their job to. Police respond to crime. The FBI Uniform Crime Reporting, or UCR, system shows PPB had 957 officers in 2010, or about 1.5 per 1,000 residents, and steadily decreased to 811 in 2023, or about 1.3 per 1,000 residents.

Many Portlanders became increasingly aware of racial disparities in policing during racial justice protests in 2020. The following February, the city launched the Portland Street Response, or PSR, pilot, which worked with Portland Fire and Rescue to respond to mental health and other crises historically responded to by police.

The city expanded the pilot throughout the year and has dramatically increased the number of incidents it responded to since. PSR responded to 875 calls traditionally responded to by PPB in 2021, according to Bureau of Emergency Communications, or BOEC, data. That includes suspicious or unwanted persons, welfare checks and self-initiated interactions — a novel way to proactively resolve issues with people in distress, some of whom may have otherwise gone on to commit a crime.

By 2022, PSR expanded its hours of operation, responding to 7,805 incidents. Over 54% of those calls were welfare checks that police would have otherwise responded to in the program's absence. PSR saved PPB 13,940 incident calls in 2023, with nearly 53%, or 7,376 calls, being welfare checks. Thus far in 2024, PSR responded to 7,903 calls despite facing significant roadblocks from Commissioner Rene Gonzalez, the commissioner in charge of public safety until Mayor Ted Wheeler seized all city bureaus July 1.

Portland's challenges can be traced back to deinstitutionalization in the 1990s, when the state closed mental health hospitals, effectively pulling the rug out from under people and reducing access to community mental health services.

The PPB do not need to be even more militarized, they need to stop acting like babies and do their job and SERVE their communities.