



City of Portland

Office of the City Council
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Portland, OR, 97204

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portland.gov/council/districts/3/tiffany-koyama-lane
503-823-4360

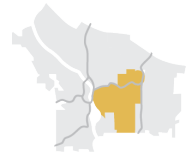
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City Councilor, District 3 Tiffany Koyama Lane

(She/Her) tiffany.koyamalan@portlandoregon.gov



May 28, 2025

Oregon House Rules Committee
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Chair and Members of the House Rules Committee,

As individual members of the Portland City Council, we write to express our strong opposition to SB 238A. We do so in our personal capacities and not on behalf of the City of Portland, which has not taken an official position on this legislation.

SB 238A would dramatically expand law enforcement's ability to deploy drones across Oregon, in ways that undermine constitutional protections and community trust. While we recognize the potential value of new technologies in emergency response, we believe this bill removes critical checks and balances and opens the door to broad, unchecked surveillance of our communities.

Overbroad Authority and Erosion of Judicial Oversight

The bill's core language authorizes law enforcement to use drones "in connection with lawful police activity" – a phrase so vague it could justify surveillance in almost any circumstance. This legislative ambiguity replaces the neutral oversight of the courts with discretionary judgment by police. SB 238A departs from Oregon's current warrant requirements and creates a troubling new exception to both state and federal constitutional protections against unreasonable searches.

Chilling Impact on Civil Liberties and Community Expression

This expansion of surveillance power risks a chilling effect on First Amendment activities, including peaceful protests. As we've seen in Portland and across the country, drone surveillance has been used to monitor protests, track movement, and collect sensitive footage without transparency or accountability. SB 238A does not include meaningful restrictions to prevent these abuses.

Disproportionate Harms to Over-Policed Communities

Communities that are already over-policed – especially Black, Indigenous, Latino, low-income, and immigrant communities – are likely to bear the brunt of expanded drone use. The bill's discretionary language enables anticipatory surveillance, increases the risk of biased enforcement, and further erodes trust in public safety institutions.



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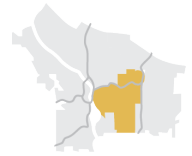
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Lack of Transparency, Accountability, and Fiscal Clarity

The bill does not adequately address how drone usage will be tracked, reported, or evaluated. There are no clear standards for documentation, data retention, or public transparency. Nor is there a clear plan for the significant costs associated with equipment, personnel, training, and data storage – costs that will compete with already strained public resources.



No Demonstrated Need for the Bill

Law enforcement already has the tools it needs. Existing Oregon law permits drone use under exigent circumstances, with a warrant, or for time-sensitive situations such as search and rescue or crime scene investigations. SB 238A offers no compelling justification for why current law is insufficient.

We urge the Legislature to slow down and engage in genuine public dialogue on this issue. Policymaking about police surveillance should not move forward without meaningful community input, particularly from those communities most impacted by policing.

We oppose SB 238A and respectfully urge you to vote no.

Sincerely,

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