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Senate Committee on the Judiciary
Oregon State Senate
Salem, Oregon

Re: SJR 203

To the Committee:

I care to submit the herein testimony to the Committee regarding SJR 203. **I support the adoption of this bill.**

Others will likely submit testimony sharing concerns regarding how enforcement authorities identify themselves to civilians. My concern focuses on the impact of masked and armed officers, agents, or military personnel on those who are hearing impaired.

I have been very hearing impaired since I incurred a hearing injury over a decade ago. My hearing disability is not just volume but is also distortion. I am constructively deaf without hearing aids. I wear state-of-the-art hearing aids which allow a level of hearing so that I may function in most daily activities. These devices can increase volume and add a measure of clarity to the incoming auditory signal. However, limitations are always present. I also rely on visual information, including facial expressions as well as focusing on a speaker's mouth movements so that I may piece together what a speaker intends to convey to me.

I learned during the Covid pandemic the impact of not being able to see people's faces. People were wearing masks. My ability to function in a conversational environment, even when very close to the speaker(s) was dramatically reduced. I learned my ability to hear and understand is significantly mitigated when the speaker is masked.

Watching videos of heavily armed enforcement officers shouting commands at civilians and immediately thereafter brutally "take down" people they determine to be non-compliant has been a wakeup call. Watching videos of civilians who have been aggressively wrestled to the ground by multiple enforcement personnel and then shot in the back multiple times has been a game changer. I am concerned that I may not be able to hear or understand commands being conveyed to me, even if shouted, by a masked (and muffled) agent/officer. I may misunderstand the command or take too long to figure it out or move in the wrong direction. All when the consequences could be catastrophic, or even lethal.

If we going to have enforcement personnel roaming the streets who are carrying deadly force, have been told they are immune from prosecution and appear to have no operative command and control in place for the deployment of deadly force, then the least that should be provided to protect the rights and safety for the hearing impaired community is stopping enforcement assets from compromising the clarity of their engagement communications. Masks muffle what is being said. I'll do what I am told if it is clearly conveyed. Unmask these enforcement assets, please, before I become another enforcement casualty.

Submitted by,



Edmund B. Rutledge