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To Senate Judiciary Committee in support of SJR 203

Salem For Refugees (SFR) strongly supports State Representative Tom Anderson's legislative effort to strengthen trust, transparency, and accountability in interactions between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

Many refugees arrive in Oregon after fleeing countries where law enforcement and security forces were not sources of safety, but of fear. For countless individuals and families, police encounters abroad were associated with arbitrary detention, corruption, violence, or persecution. These experiences do not disappear upon resettlement; they shape how refugees perceive authority, uniforms, and any interaction with law enforcement in their new home.

As a non-profit organization, SFR works closely with refugee communities to foster mutual understanding and trust between newcomers and local institutions, including law enforcement. Trust is built through visibility, openness, and human connection. Being able to see an officer's face, expressions, emotions, and identity is a critical part of that process. When officers wear masks during routine, non-emergency interactions, it can unintentionally reinforce fear, anonymity, and power imbalance, particularly for those whose past experiences already make them wary of authority.

We believe Rep. Anderson's effort recognizes an essential truth: public safety depends on trust. Policies that promote transparency and approachability help ensure that refugees and other marginalized communities feel safe seeking help, reporting crimes, and engaging with law enforcement without fear or confusion.

SFR is committed to continuing our work alongside community partners and policymakers to create an Oregon where refugees feel secure, respected, and fully included. We commend Rep. Anderson for advancing legislation that acknowledges the lived experiences of refugees and prioritizes trust as a cornerstone of public safety.

Luke Glaze

Executive Director

Salem and Corvallis For Refugees