



Testimony from Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility

In support of Community Call to Defund Police and Imagine Community Safety as Part of the Fall Budget Modification Process

11/3/20

Dear Mayor Wheeler and Commissioners Fritz, Hardesty, Eudaly, and Ryan:

Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) submits this testimony in support of cutting the Portland Police Budget by at least \$35million and reallocating those funds into programs such as the worker relief fund, emergency food relief, housing, Portland street response, and education. We strongly support the proposal by community organizations, led by Unite Oregon and Imagine Black to cut police funding and reinvest in communities. We are currently experiencing intersecting crises of police violence against citizens, a deadly pandemic, economic hardships for community members and governments, houselessness, food insecurity, climate chaos, our children not being able to attend school in person, and on and on. **Times of crisis demand decisive and effective leadership. We urge you to invest in our communities in a bold and responsible manner.**

Budgets are moral documents and the way in which the City of Portland provides ample funds to law enforcement while neglecting the health and well-being of so many in our beloved community is shameful.

At Oregon PSR, we approach problems with a public health lens. We strive to bring about policies that will promote health, security, and happiness. We also look at problems with a justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion lens. It is clear that police violence is a major public health crisis, particularly for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities as this [paper from the American Public Health Association](#) details.

We are also asking police to perform critically important services - such as responding to people experiencing mental health crises - that they are not well equipped to do. It is past time to focus on how to provide true public safety and security, rather than continuing the knee jerk response of sending in armed officers into situations that we have seen time and time again can escalate quickly often because of, rather than in spite of police presence. Real security comes about by ensuring that the conditions to thrive are present for all of us, particularly BIPOC communities that have been long neglected by this system.

We have an opportunity to invest in housing, education, worker relief and training, public transportation, public health, parks, libraries, community centers, and other services (targeting BIPOC communities to address historical and ongoing structural racism) to enhance good while cutting funds to the

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police, targeting the police programs and individuals that have been most problematic and have perpetuated the most violence against our neighbors and friends.

We speak for so many who are tired of empty platitudes and demand action. You all have the power to make Portland a healthier and safer place, but only with bold leadership and action.

Again, budgets are moral documents. They reflect what we actually do and care about, as opposed to what we say. Please demonstrate through your actions that you stand for justice as well as the health and well-being of our communities by cutting funding from the police and investing that money in the people.

Sincerely,



Patrick O'Herron, MD
Board President

