

CITIZEN REVIEW COMMITTEE

Community Oversight of Portland Police Bureau

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STATEMENT FROM THE CITIZEN REVIEW COMMITTEE REGARDING RECENT PROTESTS

The [Citizen Review Committee](#) (CRC) rejects police brutality, the use of excessive force, and the systemic racism that plagues our justice system, damages our community, and disproportionately impacts Black and Brown community members. The CRC is an advisory body to the [Independent Police Review](#) (IPR) and the [Portland Police Bureau](#) (PPB) made up of diverse volunteers from across Portland. We are appointed by the City Council to help improve police accountability, promote higher standards of police services, and increase public confidence. Our efforts to date have been insufficient: we can and must do better.

We want to start off by naming what's happening across the country—not just in this moment, but what has been happening longer than any of us have been alive. Police brutality, excessive force (including deadly force), racial profiling, and over-policing in communities of color are plaguing people of color, and Black people in particular, and in many instances costing them their lives. We are collectively witnessing more of this violence than we ever have before. But we are also witnessing more resistance: as people gather to protest in unprecedented numbers, including in Portland, we are at a junction where meaningful and long-overdue change is not only possible, but necessary.

We are deeply concerned by how PPB has made decisions to use force on protestors this week, and in the past. While these demonstrations are first and foremost about the worth of Black lives, the response to them is also illuminating a troubling pattern of police violence against protesters that interferes with public safety and freedom of speech. Exercising our Constitutional right to assemble should not be met by excessive force and police violence, especially in this moment. Showing solidarity across the country is critical to this movement; we cannot and should not be tolerating the use or threat of excessive force. “Less-lethal” weapons are still weapons, and we join city leaders and community members to urge the Portland Police Bureau to cease all usage of tear gas, flash bangs, rubber bullets, and other harmful crowd control tools on protesters immediately. The use of tear gas, which affects the respiratory system of those subject to it, during a global pandemic is egregious and puts people's lives in danger for exercising their First Amendment rights, as well as endangers the houseless community.

We on the CRC are here to be an outlet for our community to express the pain we are all feeling by the death of George Floyd, and the countless others including many in our own community like Quance Hayes, Aaron Campbell, Keaton Otis, and Kendra James, at the hands of the police. We are angry and frustrated, yet we are committed to the challenging work ahead of us as a police accountability board. Our systems of accountability here in Portland are deeply flawed, but we believe they can, and must be, changed. Police reform will not be

achieved by simply changing policy—we need a deep uprooting of our system and reimagining the future of policing for our city. Our community, like our country, cannot afford to go back to business as usual.

Where we go from here is complicated, and is going to be uncomfortable, but the pain expressed on the streets across the country must not go to waste. We will strengthen our coordination with other community-based police accountability mechanisms. We will reform our workgroups and tackle the problematic policies and directives, aligning our recommendations with what we hear from our community members. We will use our powers as outlined in [3.21.090](#) of City Code to recommend concrete policy changes to the Chief of Police, the Independent Police Review Director, and the City Council. The more specific and intentional we can be about these recommendations, the harder it will be for politicians and local officials to disregard our work and calls for reform.

We will only be successful if the community stands alongside us. We call on our communities to join us in our efforts to improve police accountability in our city through one of the following mechanisms:

- Join our listserv—we will be making several calls to action in the coming weeks, and for now this is the way we will be communicating those opportunities to the public. Stay tuned for social media pages we hope to launch soon.
- Join our workgroups—we have restructured our workgroups to cover (1) Crowd Control and Use of Force, (2) Recurring Audit, and (3) Outreach and Policy. All three groups will be meeting regularly starting this month, and community members are encouraged to attend and participate in these areas of our work.
- Keep up to date on other accountability efforts—there are multiple efforts across the city to increase police accountability, through the City’s structures, community organizations and grassroots efforts. Join their mailing lists and participate where you can.
- Inspire change—make the commitment to be a catalyst for change in your personal sphere of influence by educating family, friends, co-workers and others about the devastating effect that racism has on our communities and by refusing to allow racism a platform in your presence.

We believe a more accountable police system is attainable. We would like to thank you, our fellow Portlanders, for your input and support as we work together toward much needed change. We need your voices, and we’re here to listen to them. We know you are looking to our advisory boards to lead in this moment. We will do everything in our power to address the inherent systems that contribute to the oppression of Black, Indigenous and other People of Color and inhibit police accountability.