Your Honor,

My name is Odelia Zuckerman, and I serve as one of the full committee co-chairs of the Portland Committee on Community-Engaged Policing, or PCCEP. I want to note that i will also be speaking during public testimony to share more thoughts that are just my own.

We want to begin by recognizing that progress has been made. Over the years, we have seen members of the Portland Police Bureau show real effort to engage with PCCEP and with the community. Policies have been improved, trainings have been implemented, and we believe there is genuine will in some parts of the Bureau and the City to do better. These efforts matter. PCCEP has been functioning well, with good working relationships in and outside of the City and many recommendations approved over the last year, including a recent recommendation to preserve the high standard of transparency in PPB's exculpatory evidence directive.

But at the same time, it is hard to celebrate that progress in this moment. Almost exactly one month ago, another Portlander, Damon Lamarr Johnson, who was experiencing a mental health crisis died after an encounter with PPB. The DOJ investigation was precipitated by the officer-involved deaths of Kendra James, James Jahar Perez, James Chasse, Keaton Otis, Aaron Campbell, and others who lost their lives or experienced disproportionate force while in the middle of a severe mental health crisis. We feel there are substantial similarities to these cases from the past, and this recent tragic loss.

This last week, PCCEP held a listening session on the death of Damon Lamarr Johnson, with over 140 attendees. One of the most striking things that emerged from this session was the large number of social workers and resident service providers who attended the event, Mr. Johnson's assigned case worker. Every single one of them testified that they do not feel safe calling police when there is a resident conflict, especially involving a mental health incident. They also emphasized that mental health crises happen every single day they are on the job.

From this event, it was clear that many communities in Portland still feel significant distrust in the PPB, stemming from tragedies such as this recent death to a perceived lack of real accountability. People also expressed the need for bolstered alternative response systems like PSR, but questioned if this broadly-supported outcome is attainable given the power and influence of the Portland Police Association when it comes to determining call allocation.

This distrust extends to other areas. Last May, Portlanders exercising their right to protest faced force from PPB officers on campus at PSU – force that was never assessed per the terms of the Settlement due to a gap in monitoring. PPB's open data shows that since tracking began in July 2017, Quarter 2 of 2024 saw the highest recorded use of conducted energy weapons (CEWs, or tasers) and the highest overall force incidents.

PCCEP has received many requests from the public to examine this issue, and when we have engaged PPB and City partners on this topic in our public meetings, we have been told to simply trust that the force was necessary and that it occurred because the protestors were in the wrong. We have not forgotten that the City fell out of compliance with this Settlement Agreement for their use of force during the 2020 protests. Tomorrow night, PCCEP will be voting on a recommendation to assess this use of force per the Settlement Agreement mandates. We understand that this court approved the gap in monitoring, but there is absolutely no reason the City should be exempt from monitoring during any active period of the Settlement, especially given the force that occurred.

During this hearing, there has been discussion about self-monitoring. PCCEP has concerns about this as well. PCCEP is in self-monitoring, but there are significant criteria of the PCCEP Plan that are not being met. Namely, the PCCEP Plan stipulates that PPB must develop a Council-approved Community Engagement Plan for the whole bureau to address historic distrust and work towards meaningful connection. PCCEP realized this year that PPB does not have such a plan, and the last time one was developed and in use was 2019. We understand that PPB does do a lot of community engagement, but per the PCCEP Plan, there should be a clear plan and strategy governing how this happens. This concept is very important to our committee's core value of fostering trust. PCCEP does not understand how this piece ended up in self monitoring, since PPB hasn't made or followed a plan in many years. It should never have transitioned to self monitoring because it was not in compliance.

The recent monitoring report reflects that same tension. Based on PCCEP and broader community response from the Independent Monitor's first town hall, there is an overarching sentiment that serious issues are too often dismissed as isolated events or statistical outliers, even when they point to breakdowns in leadership, training, and accountability. Community members do not experience these incidents as aberrations. They experience them as patterns.

These events and process breakdowns are not ancient history. They are not hypotheticals. They happened while we are being told we are near the end of the Settlement Agreement.

There is a deep and painful dissonance here. If this is what compliance looks like, what was the Settlement for?

So our message today is this: Portland cannot declare this work finished. The City must build systems of accountability that will last after the Court's oversight ends. PCCEP, independent oversight, force audits, and community-centered engagement—these must be protected and strengthened. We must see a fully stood-up and functional Community Board for Police Accountability, as mandated by this Settlement. Because ultimately, the City's accountability is not to this Court alone. It is to the people of Portland.

PCCEP was created "to achieve the desired outcomes of equitable policing which exceeds constitutional requirements and to [foster] trust in PPB." This is text directly from the PCCEP Plan Settlement Amendment, which is a part of compliance assessments. So until we build lasting trust in our public safety institutions, including policing, we are not done.

Until the day comes when Portlanders—especially our most vulnerable neighbors—are safe in practice, not just in policy, we are not done.

Thank you.