

Good afternoon Senator Gelser,

The Albany Police Chief, Mario Lattanzio, and I have talking about HB 2355 and what we are experiencing. We both agreed that we'd provide you with some information. Please feel free to reach out if you want to talk.

When Oregon HB 2355 went into effect August 15 of 2017. Many of us in Law Enforcement recognized immediate public safety concerns. We were also vividly aware of negotiations that took place in order to pass the bill. Nonetheless, I can assure you, most leaders in Law Enforcement did not support reducing criminal drug possession of narcotics. Our concerns related to our ability protect our communities from increases in property crimes to fuel the drug habits without the penalties to hold individuals accountable at the same level as before. We also know that much of the push to pass this legislation focused on national statistics representing disproportionate levels of incarceration of communities of color. We must say at a local level, those disproportionalities simply are not the case. At the same time, mere possession cases, by themselves, never resulted in prison sentences. The arguments used for possession reductions were not factual.

All politics aside, in Corvallis, since the bill went into effect, we have experienced a 6% increase in Property crimes. Our drug law violations/arrests are hovering around a 2-3% increase. Although these percentages are not large, my concern is what happens year after year and how those increases aggregate themselves in greater victimization related to property crimes. At this time, we are not seeing the benefits of HB 2355 as suggested and there is increased victimization. I hope the legislature intends to evaluate the merits of HB 2355 to determine in the future if change is necessary.

Sincerely,
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