

Measure 26-217 - endorsement

Submitted September 5, 2020

We became aware something was terribly wrong when James Chasse, Jr., was killed in 2006. Police approached him for looking “strange” near his home in the Pearl District. They beat him to death, and denied him medical treatment by fabricating stories of fictitious drug use rather than disclosing their beating and tasing. Portland’s response? After nearly four years of “process,” no discipline for the officers.

The pattern of Portland Police violence against people with mental illness was so extreme that in 2012, the City of Portland reached a secret settlement with the US Department of Justice, after finding a pattern of excessive force on citizens with mental illness. Unfortunately--unlike most DOJ settlements--the Portland Police maintained its own oversight.

Since Chasse’s death, 30 more people with a mental health issue, alcoholism or addiction, have been killed by the Portland Police. In fact, studies have shown that use of force against persons with mental illness has actually gone up since the 2012 DOJ settlement.

We are not surprised. **It is abundantly clear all of us - including people with mental illness - are unsafe as long as the Portland Police control their own oversight.**

In the United States, the power of the government comes from its citizens. We give police the enormous power to use deadly force against our citizens. It is not only our right, but our duty as citizens to ensure our police will not needlessly endanger others. When all it could take now for police to kill a citizen with impunity is they look “strange,” no one is safe.

Collectively, we have been working to stop police violence against vulnerable people for decades. We believe Measure 26-217 will succeed where prior efforts have failed because it includes critical elements for **real** independent oversight.

Join us and Vote Yes on Measure 26-217.

Mental Health Alliance

Learn more about the Mental Health Alliance at www.mentalhealthalliance.org