

PCCEP Statement Condemning the Excessive Use of Force Against Peaceful Protestors

ADOPTED July 28, 2020

PCCEP is committed to the Black Lives Matter movement and the BIPOC community in Portland and across the country. We are concerned that people who demonstrate in favor of Black Lives Matter on the streets of Portland are subject to the use of chemical agents and munitions.

For more than 60 nights, we have watched as the Portland police have reacted to protests against police brutality with beatings, chemical agents, pepper spray and flash bang grenades, munitions which indiscriminately impact hundreds of peaceful protestors as well as other residents in the vicinity. We recognize that policing dynamic protests is complicated, and we do not condone property destruction, lighting fires, or attacking police officers, but the kinds of indiscriminate responses by the Portland police have impacted journalists, politicians, legal observers and peaceful protestors. This is unacceptable and it has eroded trust between the community and the Portland police.

Furthermore, we condemn the Federal agents that were sent to our city on June 26th. Their lawless behavior has created an additional strain and danger to the citizens of our city, with nightly shooting of rubber bullets, chemical agents and other less lethal munitions, including against Mayor Ted Wheeler. The right to participate in peaceful protests in any city is a right that each and every one of us is guaranteed by the US Constitution.

PCCEP has already called for an end to the use of chemical agents and other munitions against protestors. In response to a lawsuit, US District Judge Marco Hernandez wrote that there is a “strong likelihood” the police bureau violated protestors’ Fourth Amendment rights, which prohibits excessive use of force. Although the judge’s restraining order on use of crowd control devices limits the deployment of chemical agents, it is hard to see how that has improved the situation on the ground as protestors continue to be subject to chemical agents, pepper spray and other munitions by both the Portland police and by federal police.

We join with House Speaker Tina Kotek, Senator Lew Frederick, and Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty in denouncing the unwarranted excessive use of force by the Portland police. If there are individuals who have committed crimes, they should be arrested and charged with crimes. None of their actions justifies the blanket use of munitions against peaceful protestors. We call on the Portland Police Bureau and the Police Commissioner to protect the constitutional rights of Portlanders to peacefully assemble and protest.