



TO: Multnomah Charter Review Committee

FR: Kayse Jama, Director of Center for Inter-Cultural Organizing

DA: April 20, 2016

RE: Testimony in Support of Amending Charter to Make Multnomah County Sheriff
an Appointed Position

The Center for Inter-Cultural Organizing's mission is to develop and sustain a diverse, grassroots organization working to build a multi-racial, multicultural movement for immigrant and refugee rights. We envision a strong multicultural democracy inclusive of all. Two of our primary focus areas are:

Civic Engagement and Policy Advocacy—Our civic engagement program provides a pathway for immigrants and refugees to participate in democratic processes through training programs, hands-on projects and collective action that produce concrete improvements in their lives.

Organizing and Mobilization—CIO assists immigrant and refugee community members in building the organizing skills necessary to impact policies that affect them and to work collaboratively, mobilizing diverse constituencies.

The Center for Inter-Cultural Organizing strongly urges the Charter Review Committee to refer to voters an amendment to the County Charter to make the Office of Sheriff appointed by a five-member Board of County Commissioners.

Sheriffs play an important role, along with other local law enforcement officials, in the criminal justice system in Oregon and across the country. And we are all too aware of the harsh treatment of people of color at the hands of law enforcement—in extreme cases even resulting in death. Research reveals significant racial disparities at many levels in the criminal justice system—from arrest and charging practices, to setting bail, to length of sentencing and conditions while in custody.

Yet, the criminal justice system struggles to create trustworthy or transparent methods for holding itself accountable when these inequities occur as a system, or even to address individual incidents. For that reason, we believe the Charter Review Committee is on the right track to refer a measure to the ballot to amend Multnomah County's Charter to make the Office of Sheriff an appointed one, similar to a Chief of Police for a city.



When a law enforcement official breaks trust with a community we should not have to wait until an election that may be several years away to vote him or her out of office. And in the case of Multnomah County, a recall effort is often not within reach due to the high threshold for signature gathering and the resources that would have to be marshaled. This can be especially challenging for those most impacted by racial inequities in the system who may also be the most disenfranchised from the electoral process. Instead, similar to a Chief of Police who answers to an elected city council and/or a Mayor, we should have a Board of County Commissioners who could act swiftly and directly to ensure the Office of Sheriff is accountable.

Unfortunately, we are at a crossroads now specifically with Multnomah County Sheriff Dan Stanton who is embroiled in a slew of allegations of improprieties or inequities on his watch. Not the least of which is the recently released audit on racial inequities with regard to use of force.

An internal audit requested by Multnomah County Sheriff Dan Stanton has found that employees at the county jails disproportionately use force against minority inmates.

For example, according to the audit obtained by the Portland Tribune, although African-Americans accounted for only 27 percent of the jail population between 2012 and 2014, they were involved in 40 percent of the use of force reports filed by employees of the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office.

According to the audit, the MCSO does not currently have a system for identifying employees who use force at a higher rate than others. At the same time, the audit found that 15 percent of employees were responsible for 45 percent of the force reports.

Thursday, 11 February 2016 20:05 | Written by [Jim Redden](#) | Portland Tribune
<http://portlandtribune.com/pt/9-news/293159-170460-sheriffs-review-shows-racial-differences-in-use-of-force-at-jail>

The time is now to bring greater, more accessible and transparent accountability to the Office of Sheriff in Multnomah County. We urge you to forward a recommendation for a referral to voters, an amendment to the County Charter to appoint the Office of Sheriff in Multnomah County.

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