

Statement of Michael Hopcroft

Mental Health Alliance

For 8/24/2021

Good afternoon, Your Honor. My name is Michael P. Hopcroft, and I was before this court last year in this case testifying on the records the PPB was releasing to the public on use of force against certain populations. These populations included people in mental health crises, people in drug-related incidents involving personal use, and "Transient" people who were assumed to be houseless.

At the time I was doing data analysis on these classes and noted the difficulty in apples-to-apples comparisons when noting totals and categories of force, based on data supplied by the PPB that were accessible to the public.

One of the things they were asked to do is to take some of that data and put each report on a dashboard on a city website. That was particularly dedicated citizens, and anyone else, could get the data to show what means the police were using and, in a statistical sense, to whom. It is theoretically possible to download multiple years documents and chart trends over time, but that has been harder than it looks and this problem, if anything, has worsened.

This is due to the PPB continually refining its data categories to add some and remove others. For example, the use of tasers has been categorized a few different ways in these reports. Which is well and good as long as the refinements can be retroactively applied to past years and the definitions corrected to the current dataset. It is not just important that current years be readily accessible. We must be able to track these numbers across time if we are to get meaningful answers on whether police behavior and training have changed since the Settlement Agreement has been in place. And we need clarity in them. I'm sure the PPB brass get complete reports every quarter. We, as citizens and affected by the actions of police, need the same transparency.

Even within the limitations I have cited, I did not find any data that indicates improvement in police conduct in resolving mental health crisis situations. As I have stated as recently as last week in the Oregonian, the police are usually the wrong people to send out to deal with mental health crises. Most situations end peacefully, but the ones that go south go south rapidly and with devastating consequences.

This case is about the accountability of individual officers and the PBB for their actions. Sadly, they are unwilling to accept that accountability, and that is the definition of non-compliance.

I thank Your Honor and the court for your time.