

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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The Multnomah County Circuit Court rules that the Portland Police union’s initiative petition to amend the Portland City Charter to increase police officers, among other things, is unconstitutional.

In March 2024, Joy Alise Davis, a Portland voter and President and Executive Director of Imagine Black, filed a petition with the Multnomah County Circuit Court challenging the Portland Police union's initiative petition PDX24OL-02 on the grounds that it did not meet constitutional requirements.

In an initial order last week, Circuit Court Judge Katharine von Ter Stegge has agreed with Ms. Davis — concluding that the “Initiative proposes an impermissible administrative change” and that Davis’s “constitutional argument prevails and this Initiative, as written, may not appear on the November ballot.”

“This is a win for democracy and Oregonians. The PPA’s attempt to circumvent the constitutional requirements for a ballot measure with false solutions to public safety is a clear affront to the principles of transparency, accountability, and community representation inherent to the democratic process. We are glad to see that the Multnomah County Circuit Court has agreed,” said Joy Alise Davis, President and Executive Director of Imagine Black. “Imagine Black and the larger Oregon community are one step closer to creating a public safety system that includes our community’s voices and allows Oregonians to advocate for themselves. This summer, Imagine Black plans to further our efforts to advocate inclusive and community-driven public safety measures with new programming and initiatives.”

Kelly Simon, Legal Director of the ACLU of Oregon, who represented Petitioner Davis, stated: “The law applies equally to everyone, including the Portland Police union. As the court found, the initiative petition’s attempt to dictate an increase in police cannot move forward because it was not a legislative act under the Oregon Constitution. This opinion ensures that issues of great importance to Portland’s voters — like homelessness, drug addiction, and crisis response — are presented to them properly and with integrity.”

Sandy Chung, Executive Director of the ACLU of Oregon, stated: “The Portland Police union’s initiative did not propose real solutions to issues like homelessness, drug addiction, and mental health. These are top-of-mind issues for Portlanders, but arresting and jailing people do not solve them. If the police union’s petition were permitted to go to the voters, we would have risked taking our limited tax dollars away from real solutions that do not involve police.”

PDX24OL-02 will not be on the ballot this November. We are still waiting on a ruling on the Portland Police union's initiative petition PDX24OL-03, which if on the November ballot and adopted by voters would gut the independent oversight and disciplinary powers of the Community Board for Police Accountability established by 82% of Portland voters in 2020. Stay tuned for updates.

About the ACLU of Oregon:

The ACLU of Oregon is a nonpartisan, nonprofit membership organization with more than 28,000 members statewide. The organization works in the courts, legislature, and communities to defend and advance our democracy, civil liberties, and civil rights.

About Imagine Black:

Imagine Black helps Black Oregonians imagine the alternatives they deserve, build political participation and achieve their vision of a world where people of African descent enjoy the rights, resources and recognition to be a thriving, resilient and connected community. Established in 2019, Imagine Black, is organized as a 501(c)4 tax-exempt organization that engages in legislative lobbying and certain political activity. To learn more about Imagine Black and its work, visit www.imagineblack.org.

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