



# PRESS RELEASE

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## **Legislative POC Caucus Issues Statement on Downtown Portland Protests**

SALEM – The Legislative People of Color (POC) Caucus jointly issued the following statement:

“Yesterday, at “A Eulogy for Black America,” thousands of Portlanders gathered to mourn the death of George Floyd and the countless other Black men, women, and children slain at the hands of those sworn to protect and serve. They gathered to be in community with each other to proclaim that Black Lives Matter, to demand accountability, to grieve, to let the world know that even amidst a global pandemic we will not allow Black people to die silent and invisible deaths. They gathered to say that long before Coronavirus began to ravage our communities, the leading cause of Black death in America was, and continues to be, institutional racism.

“By now, we all know that after that protest, a small group went to downtown Portland with the intent to deface buildings and start fires. These opportunists were outliers who were not following the leadership of Black community organizers. Vandalizing small businesses, some of them Black and POC owned. In one instance, it took Black community members placing themselves between a business and vandals to protect it from being destroyed. We are just beginning to lay plans to reopen and these actions are

destructive to our efforts as we try to weave together what COVID-19 has already torn apart.

“We are all angry at the disregard for Black lives, the lack of justice in our criminal justice system, the funneling of wealth from Black communities. We, the POC Caucus, are intimately acquainted with the fear that for US, and for our fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, husbands, wives and partners, any encounter with law enforcement could turn deadly.

“We are doing the work every day to show up for our communities, to pass legislation that holds police accountable, that formalizes anti-racist, anti-bias trainings and zero tolerance policies for racist behavior in our institutions.

“We need **all** hands on deck for this work. We need our non-Black community members to speak truth to power, to protect us, to stand with us in this fight for justice, in this fight for our lives.”