

I'm Kelsey Hamlin and I live in Seattle but grew up in Skagit County. I want to first thank the committee for this hearing. I am here to support HB 1054.

Teargas was released en masse in Seattle over the course of 2020, harming children less than 10 years old in the crowd, and coating the air for days. The clouds were heavier than our smokiest summer days. Families with babies inside of the neighborhood apartments reported the teargas leaking in, making their babies cough throughout the week.

Many women, myself included, experience missing periods completely after getting teargassed. Some protesters get their period multiple times in the same month, others have debilitating cramps, and some even experience blood clots the size of half a fist. Transgender protesters who stopped menstruating months or years ago due to testosterone have seen their cycles restart. It is irrefutable that teargas does dramatic damage to our bodies. Tear gas often causes long-term harm, by making people more susceptible to contracting influenza, pneumonia and other illnesses due to lung damage, per a US military study of thousands of recruits. In an enclosed space, teargas can blind and kill people through chemical burns and respiratory failure.

Even in just Seattle, this year, in open space, we saw multiple people maimed due to canisters exploding near them. This is from teargas as well as flashbangs.

Again, war-level teargas was deployed en masse during a lung-attacking pandemic.

These are heavily chemically-based weapons of war. So they are additionally toxic to the environment as it runs from the streets into our water.

Another thing we saw were badge- and name- hiding, after which we had a record number of use of force complaints against SPD.

I have seen first-hand that the presence of police and willingness to use force is far greater during protests for Black and brown lives than gatherings for upholding the status quo with a majority-white crowd. I know this because I covered protests as a journalist for four years. This is true today, was true during the recent DC Capitol mob, was true during the No-DAPL protests on Indigenous land, was true during the 2016 inaugural protest on UW campus during which a Trump-supporter shot a protester medic regardless of the mass multi-departmental police force and their militarized weapons, and has been true throughout history.

It is very clear we are beyond the point of reform--a decade into such efforts with SPD now using bodycams but regardless still racking up millions of dollars in settlements due to reckless use of force, tear gas, and military grade weapons. We have tried reform for years and nothing has changed. So the next logical step is to change the weapons and methods allowed.

I urge you to pass HB 1054 out of committee for the health of our planet, the health of ourselves and our loved ones, and for public safety. Thank you again.