



### TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 2192

Submitted to the House Education Committee, Oregon State Legislature  
By Shannon Wight, Associate Director, Partnership for Safety and Justice  
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Chair Gelser, Members of the Committee:

I am the Associate Director for the Partnership for Safety and Justice. Partnership for Safety and Justice is a statewide advocacy organization that advocates for smart public safety policy – which to us means advocating for victims and survivors of crime, as well as for people convicted of crime – to create policies that create a more effective public safety system. I have worked in the criminal and juvenile justice field for 20 years, including co-founding a youth law and advocacy office in Louisiana.

I am here today on behalf of Partnership for Safety and Justice in support of House Bill 2192, which interrupts the “school to prison pipeline” by promoting discipline practices that hold youth accountable and keep them in school.

The phrase “school to prison pipeline” comes out of the recognition of the dramatic rise in use of expulsion and suspension for discipline problems in schools over the past 20 years. While these policies have always been part of a continuum of disciplinary actions available to schools, their use has increased significantly since the 1990s with profoundly negative impacts. Youth of all races have faced larger numbers of suspensions and expulsions, but youth of color are far more likely to receive these harsh school penalties.

“Zero Tolerance” policies feed the numbers of youth suspended and expelled by forcing the hand of school administrators who might use other methods for both holding youth accountable while not disrupting their economic progress. Initially intended for serious behaviors like bringing guns to school or serious violence, “zero tolerance” is often applied for much less serious actions like “defiance.”

School suspensions and expulsions have a dramatic and negative impact on youth outcomes. Youth who are suspended or expelled are more likely to fall behind and ultimately drop out of school. Youth who fall behind in school and don’t have a structured environment throughout the day are more likely to engage in behavior that brings them into contact with the juvenile justice system.

While the pathway between school and prison is not always a direct one, it has become such a problem across the country that states have taken steps like the ones outlined in HB 2192 to mitigate the negative impacts of these policies. At the local and national level, these policies are being addressed. Just this past December, the Senate Judiciary Committee of the United States Congress held a hearing on “Ending the School to Prison Pipeline.”

Youth who stay in school and get the support they need to be successful students are those most likely to avoid making the kinds of choices that get them in trouble with the law. HB 2192 helps move us towards policies that give administrators the tools they need to manage school problems effectively without pushing youth out of one of our most effective public safety tools – our schools.