

Date: March 28, 2019

To: The Honorable Floyd Prozanski, Chair; The Honorable Kim Thatcher, Vice-Chair; Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

From: Kelly Iverson, Showing Up for Racial Justice Portland

Re: Support for youth justice reform, SB 1008, SB 969, SB 968, SB 966

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of Senate Judiciary Committee:

My name is Kelly Iverson and I represent SURJ PDX. Our mission is to educate, organize and mobilize white people to work for racial justice. We believe Oregon should have a more humane youth justice system that focuses on accountability for youth and safety for our communities.

Over two decades ago, Measure 11 passed at the height of the tough-on-crime era. **This measure was unimaginably barbaric, causing youth as young as 15 to be charged and sentenced as adults for certain acts, facing the same mandatory minimum penalties as adults, despite their young age.**

Oregonians believe that our youth justice system should focus on prevention and rehabilitation. **We can both hold youth accountable and help them heal from trauma that no child should ever have to experience. As adults, we should give ourselves our best chance to repair the damage we have collectively inflicted on young Oregonians.**

There are four proposals in front of the legislature this session that focus on prevention and rehabilitation for youth in the criminal justice system that we support:

- **SB 969 (End Automatic Waiver into Adult Court)** places youth accused of any crimes in the juvenile justice system instead of the adult justice system. To move a youth to the adult justice system, prosecutors would need to request a special hearing with a judge who would decide where youth are placed.
- **SB 966 (Hearing Before Transfer to DOC)** would require an additional review before a youth with a long sentence would be transferred to an adult prison. Currently, Oregon youth who are given long sentences can stay in a youth prison until age twenty-five and are then transferred to an adult prison. This proposal would allow a judge to determine if the twenty-five-year old has been sufficiently rehabilitated to transfer them to community-based supervision, rather than adult prison.
- **SB 1008 (Second Look Hearings)** establishes a process where all youth who are convicted in adult court have access to a "Second Look" hearing half way through their sentence. At that hearing, a judge determines whether the youth has taken responsibility for their crime and been rehabilitated, which would allow the remainder of their sentence to be served under community-based supervision, rather than being incarcerated.
- **SB 968 (End Juvenile Life Without Parole)** would eliminate life without parole sentences for youth in Oregon by establishing a process to ensure that anyone convicted of a crime when they are under eighteen years old receives a chance for parole after fifteen years of incarceration.

We respectfully request that this committee moves these proposals forward swiftly. **It is a moral outrage that it is even a possibility for youth to be tried as adults, transferred to adult prison, or receive life without parole. That is also a moral crime; we need to hold ourselves accountable for the harm we have done to Oregon youth.**

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Kelly Iverson