



## Support for HB 3224

April 4, 2019

Chair Williamson, Vice Chairs Gorsek and Sprenger, and members of the committee,

My name is Samantha Gladu and I represent the Bus Project. Our mission is to amplify the voice and leadership of diverse young people to achieve a more just and equitable Oregon. As an organization that builds political power and strong, effective leadership pipelines for young people, our work and our communities are greatly impacted by the fact that Oregon incarcerates youth at a higher rate than most states.

While our understanding of brain science, organizing, culture shift, community development and community justice have changed over the years— our understanding of District Attorney's policies and outcomes have not. This is due to a lack of baseline policies, consistency, and transparency for which legislative action is required to remedy.

As the most powerful actors in the criminal justice system, the policies that inform how District Attorney offices are run and how they make decisions shouldn't be a mystery. Basic office policies should be easily available to the public, and making this change is essential in order to develop and maintain trust with the community. Oregonians have long placed high value in transparency, and the notion that law enforcement offices might have something to hide can only damage community trust. Legislative action can ensure there is greater intention, thoughtfulness, and consistency within our justice system.

Prosecutors operate with high levels of discretion. The absence of meaningful policies and guidelines can lead to unequal practices, confusion for victims and defendants, unclear expectations in the system, and bad outcomes. With no state requirements, District Attorney offices can essentially operate in the dark, outside of public view, and without any pressure to evolve and update their priorities and procedures to reflect best practices and improve outcomes for Oregonians. We must inspect how to better measure the impact of the tens of millions of dollars in public resources spent on these offices each year so that we can highlight and understand the successes, failures, and potential for innovation within our legal system. District Attorney offices operate with limited public oversight. The public deserves to know their basic charging policies and be able to independently verify that individual cases are being treated in accordance with those policies.

The Bus Project asks that the committee vote in favor of House Bill 3224. This is a valuable and critical step to ensuring that our fundamental rights apply to all Oregonians.

Sincerely,  
Samantha Gladu, Executive Director, The Bus Project