



Senator Committee on Judiciary

**Re:** SB 966, SB 968, SB 969, SB 1008

April 8, 2019

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB 966, SB 968, SB 969, and SB 1008, to create a more humane youth justice system that focuses on safety for our communities and opportunity for youth. My name is Jenny Lee, and I am the Advocacy Director at the Coalition of Communities of Color. We are a coalition of 19 culturally specific organizations dedicated to cross-cultural, collective action for racial equity. Ending the devastating and disproportionate impact of the criminal justice system on communities of color is a major priority for our members. Increasing opportunities for youth in the criminal justice system to make amends, get back on track, and succeed in their communities is a critical part of this vision.

A fair and effective justice system must be aimed at prevention and rehabilitation. But because of Measure 11's harsh provisions, our current youth justice system is falling short of these goals. Measure 11's policies have had a devastating impact on communities of color in Oregon. Youth as young as 15 have faced severe punishments and are subject to the same mandatory minimum sentences as adults. Incarceration of youth in our communities has exacerbated socioeconomic and racial disparities and ruined the prospects of far too many young people. With this legislation, we have the opportunity to center our values of forgiveness and second chances so that youth have the best chance possible to make amends and receive the help they need to address their own trauma.

We believe that the proposals in these bills—ending automatic waiver into adult court, providing a hearing before transfer to the Department of Corrections, second look hearings, and ending juvenile life without parole sentences—are common-sense policies that will help give young people the second chance they need to create a path to success in their communities. The key is rehabilitation and education, not prisons, and these policies will help youth access these programs and contribute positively to their communities.

The disproportionate impact on youth of color make these reforms all the more urgent, and we respectfully urge you to pass these bills. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB 966, SB 968, SB 969, and SB 1008.

Respectfully,

Jenny Lee  
Advocacy Director  
Coalition of Communities of Color

