



Support for SB 1008

April 24, 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.

For the past year we have been strategizing and organizing with a group of incarcerated youth at MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility. We have talked about how they can influence policy, brought in guests ranging from elected officials to Angela Davis, and talked at length about the impacts of mandatory minimums on youth. It's clear that our sentencing system is causing harm, locking away young people for making mistakes without looking at the full picture of what's happening in their lives. And worse, our sentencing system is disproportionately impacting Black and Brown youth, with Black youth three times as likely as White youth to receive a Measure 11 charge, and Black, Latino and Native American youth significantly overrepresented in the number of indictments relative to their White peers and their proportion of the state's population. We need your legislative action to address this structural racism, and we need you to persuade your colleagues to also vote yes on Senate Bill 1008.

On Saturday we had guests Judge Ortega and Chief Justice James Egan from the Oregon Court of Appeals at MacLaren. We talked about their experiences, their hopes, and the racism of the legal system. It's really clear that things have changed since 1994 when Measure 11 was passed. Twenty five years ago we were in a tough on crime era, without the same understanding we have today of trauma, brain science, and the impacts of mass incarceration. This sentencing system is a blunt and harsh tool that doesn't allow for nuance, and exacerbates problems by harshly sentencing youth as young as 15 to things like life without parole. Justice and accountability are opportunities to heal, not just to punish youth. When youth need help, we should provide them with the best chance to repair the damage they've caused, while also healing their own trauma and getting them the help they need. We support the components of this bill: ending automatic waivers into adult court, hearings before transfer of youth to adult prison, second look hearings halfway through sentences, and ending juvenile life without parole.

The Bus Project asks that the committee vote in favor of Senate Bill 1008. Our lives and communities depend on this. This is a very small step forward. Will you fight for us?

Sincerely,
Samantha Gladu, Executive Director, The Bus Project