



Testimony in Support of HB 4088
Kelly Simon, Interim Legal Director of ACLU of Oregon
House Committee on Economic Development
February 3, 2020

Chair Lively and Members of the Committee:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon¹ has long been involved in efforts to reduce the harm that the War on Drugs has brought upon Oregonians, in particular Oregonians of color and low-income Oregonians. The disproportionate impacts of this archaic and failed tough-on-crime approach demands that the implementation of our cannabis industry regulations be focused intentionally on repairing that very harm in an equitable manner.

Drug laws are not just if they fail to address equity concerns. HB 4088 is an important first step in addressing equity in the cannabis industry and implementation of our legalization system.

In 2010, the ACLU published a report on racial disparities in marijuana arrests, which we submitted to the record along with this statement. Despite having one of the lower levels of marijuana possession arrest disparities in the country, Oregon still arrested black people at nearly double the rate of white people. And in 2010, over half of all drug arrests in Oregon were merely marijuana possession arrests. This is a past we must not forget as we look to the future and endeavor to build a fair and just cannabis industry.

Recognizing these harms, we commend the Oregon legislators and community members who have sought to reduce barriers to entry into the cannabis economy for people who were adversely impacted by the enforcement of Oregon's failed criminalization approach. This is what smart justice and smart drug policy looks like, and it is how we begin to repair past harm.

For these reasons, the ACLU of Oregon urges your support for HB 4088. Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹ The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon) is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of civil liberties and civil rights. We have more than 28,000 members in the State of Oregon, and that number is growing as we speak.