

Dear Committee Members:

I submit this letter of testimony in support of SB571 and its sister bill HB2366. There are many reasons that incarcerated felons should retain the right to vote. Some are listed below.

o95% of these people return to the communities in which they previously resided. They are already disconnected from their community. Voting while incarcerated will keep them better connected and can make their transition back into the community easier.

oA study by Sentencing Project shows that voting can even reduce recidivism. Those who vote are less likely to return to prison.

oA commitment to racial justice requires acknowledgement that people of color are disproportionately incarcerated, thus disproportionately affecting voter rates. The only reparation for this is reinstating their full voting rights.

oPhilosophically, consider Oregon's belief in democracy for all. These people deserve representation, deserve their voices to be heard. They will be living under the laws set up by their representatives so they should have the right to vote for those representatives.

oSome of the incarcerated felons are property owners, taxpayers, and/or have children in public schools. They deserve the same right to vote, especially since some of the issues on the ballot directly affect them.

oToo many of us see the imprisoned through stereotypic memes. Not all are the vicious monsters that automatically come to mind when we think of prisoners. Imprisoned people have themselves been victims of childhood trauma yet most remain thoughtful, caring human beings. Allowing them to vote can help restore their sense of humanity.

oImprisoned people can see the government as the enemy. The civic engagement involved by voting changes that dynamic.

oThis bill has the support of a broad coalition of advocacy groups. For example, Next Up <https://nextuporegon.org/> , Oregon Justice Resource Center <https://ojrc.info/> , NARAL NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon , ACLU ACLU of Oregon , APANO APANO | Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon , Oregon UU Voices for Justice Deepening Democracy, Trish Garner (State Public Policy Chair) for American Association of University Women of Oregon, Sunrise PDX, OASIS, Beyond These Walls, and others.

Thank you.
Cheryl Conway
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