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Hello members of the committee. My name is Kristen Sartor and I live in Multnomah County. I am writing to express my support for House Bill 2366, which would ensure that persons who are imprisoned have their voting rights restored.

As a mental health professional, I often reflect on the purpose of America's system of mass incarceration, which imprisons a higher rate of people than any other country in the world. We need to ask ourselves if the ultimate goal of putting people behind bars is to work towards rehabilitation or if it is simply a form of punishment.

If we would like to see our fellow humans return to their communities as productive members of society, we must focus on rehabilitation. This includes recognizing the humanity, citizenship and dignity of each and every person, regardless of their circumstances or convictions. The right to vote, something many of us take for granted, can make a huge personal difference to someone who is incarcerated and cut off from society. It gives people an opportunity to continue to be invested in and engaged with their community.

When we treat imprisonment simply as punishment, it is easy for people who are incarcerated to view the government as an enemy and to feel totally ostracized from society. It is senseless to take away the right to vote from someone because they have committed a crime; there are no safety concerns with incarcerated persons voting. When we strip away the right to vote from our citizens, we simply make it harder for them to feel connected to and invested in their communities. This makes reintegration into society much more difficult, and all of us are less safe as a result.

Please support House Bill 2366 and restore voting rights to our incarcerated citizens.  
Thank you very much for your time and service,  
Kristen Sartor