
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon

March 18, 2021

Chair Bynum, Vice-Chairs Noble and Power, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon strongly supports House Bill 2169 to improve public safety in Oregon and reform our criminal justice system by adopting the recommendations of the Racial Justice Council. Reproductive freedom will never be achieved until all Oregonians are able to choose when and whether to become a parent; have the recognition and resources to care for themselves and their families and communities; and be able to pursue their life's interests without fear of violence at the hands of police.

Public safety should make the public feel safe. However, Oregon's criminal justice system continues to disproportionately detain, criminalize and harm communities of color. Oregon must approach public safety and police accountability with a racial justice lens that provides transparency and accountability and restores Oregonians who are impacted by the criminal justice system.

Communities of color in Oregon have lived through generations of white supremacist violence and systemic racism, creating deep trauma and widespread harm that impacts all of us. Many people of color — especially Black Oregonians — do not feel safe in their own communities, homes, places of worship, schools or public spaces.

HB 2169 includes recommendations from the Criminal Justice Reform & Police Accountability Committee of the Governor's Racial Justice Council. In response to the long-overdue national and local uprising for racial justice sparked by the death of George Floyd in 2020, the council is moving Oregon forward by centering Black, Indigenous, Latinx and immigrant voices in the development of public safety policy solutions.

The proposed reforms would accomplish the following:

- **Promote restorative justice:** Encourage greater use of restorative justice practices with funding provided to the Criminal Justice Commission.
- **Prevent unnecessary deportations:** Make diversion possible for immigrants accused of crime, so they can perform community service, pay restitution and/or receive treatment in their community, rather than automatic deportation and traumatic family separation.
- **Expand police oversight:** Authorize the creation of a police oversight agency or board by city and county governments.
- **Improve transparency:** Improve public access to personnel files for police officers who have been investigated for misconduct.
- **Require police identification:** Require law enforcement officers to inform a stopped person of the reason for the stop and that they have the right to refuse a request to search.
- **Ensure informed police searches:** Require law enforcement officers to provide name and badge number if the stop doesn't result in an arrest or citation.

Widespread racial disparities exist throughout Oregon's criminal justice system. Black people represent 2.2 percent of Oregon's population but 9.3 percent of the state's prison population.

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Incarceration greatly exacerbates the harms of racial targeting by police. Each time we lock someone up, we also sentence their family members to traumatic separation and financial hardship.

Additionally, both ethnic and racial disparities were identified in traffic and pedestrian stop data submitted by the Oregon State Police, according to 2019 reporting from the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission. Profiling leads to disproportionate arrests and conviction rates among communities of color.

Racial inequality in our public safety system has been hollowing out entire communities and creating generational trauma for too long. The disruptions caused by COVID-19 and community-led calls for racial justice have magnified the urgency for action.

The policies developed by the Criminal Justice Reform and Police Accountability Committee will make all of us safer by centering those who are most disproportionately harmed by our criminal justice system. Together, we can make Oregon a place where we all have a fair shot and feel safe. We urge your YES vote on HB 2169.

Sincerely,

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Interim Executive Director
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon