



A STRONG VOICE FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

TO: Chair Bynum
Vice-Chair Noble & Power
Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FR: Jacob Finkelman, OR AFL-CIO

RE: HB 2169, Support

March 17, 2021

The Oregon AFL-CIO represents 300,000 workers across the state and is a voice for all workers in the legislative process. All workers and their families need and deserve to live in safe homes and safe communities, but this is not the case for Oregonians, especially communities of color. Oregon AFL-CIO strongly supports HB 2169 to improve public safety in Oregon and reform our criminal justice system by adopting the recommendations of the Racial Justice Council. As members of the Fair Shot For All Coalition we support this bill as part of our ongoing work towards achieving racial justice in Oregon.

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.

We know that Oregon's criminal justice system continues to disproportionately detain, criminalize, and harm communities of color. Oregon must approach public safety and criminal justice 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. Many people of color—especially Black Oregonians—do not feel safe in their own communities, homes, places of worship, at school, or in public spaces. The deep trauma of living in a culture of white supremacy and systemic racism has created widespread harm that impacts all of us.

The proposed reforms will promote restorative justice, prevent unnecessary deportations, expand police oversight, improve transparency, require police identification, and ensure informed police searches. All of these changes are steps in the process to protect all Oregonians and prioritize the safety, equality, and joy of our greater communities.

Our current criminal justice system does more violence than the physical time spent in jail. It is economic warfare on families (disproportionately black and brown families) by taking away primary earners. Two in three families had difficulty meeting basic needs as a result of their loved one's incarceration. 70 percent of these families were caring for children under 18. Even a day in jail, even if innocent, can cost someone their job. Additionally, a criminal record can ruin a person's chance of being able to support themselves and their family again. This system is an attack on workers and our dedication to sustainable jobs and equality in our growing industries.

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.