



To: Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee
From: Paul Solomon, Sponsors
Date: March 31, 2021
RE: Senate bill 819, ensuring justice integrity

My name is Paul Solomon, executive director at Sponsors a re-entry program in Lane County and co-chair of the Criminal Justice Reform and Police Accountability Committee of the Governor's Racial Justice Council. I am here today to speak in support of Senate bill 819, the justice integrity bill.

As many of you are aware, Governor Brown convened the Racial Justice Council in the wake of nationwide unrest grounded in the continued violence and mistreatment by law enforcement against our Black neighbors. The Council was convened with a charge to change how we listen to, engage with, respond to, and support Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) and Tribal members in Oregon.

We have spent the last 6 months reviewing data, research, and current policy and hearing from our community partners, state agencies, and individuals regarding how our state and its systems (whether that's housing, healthcare, or criminal justice) are not working with and for our most marginalized and historically underserved communities.

As the co-chair of the Criminal Justice Reform and Policy Accountability Committee I can tell you that we have reviewed countless policy and program proposals for recommendation to the full Racial Justice Council and the Governor's office.

Senate bill 819 is one such policy that we have reviewed. During discussion our committee was excited to read this legislative proposal, SB 819 is an important tool for fixing some of the wrongs in our justice system.

Senate Bill 819, importantly, creates a mechanism to review and correct past wrongs and ensure that justice is served post-conviction. The bill will allow prosecutors to revisit the fairness of previous convictions and sentences, and to petition the court to vacate the conviction or resentence a person when the prosecutor finds it is in the interest of justice.

This is particularly important to members of the Racial Justice Council because we know that Black, Indigenous, and people of color are more often convicted for longer sentences for the same or lesser crimes as their white counterparts.

In the work that we do at Sponsors we know that the remedies currently available through post-conviction are time-consuming for the individual, the State, and the courts; costly to the State; and unavailable to prosecutors. We will continue our work to change the system, but we must also address this upstream through the changes proposed in Senate bill 819.

On behalf of Sponsors, I urge your full support of SB 819 and your commitment to actualizing a just carceral system in Oregon by helping to remediate past injustices.