

Dear Chair Bynum, Vice-Chairs Noble and Power, and the Committee,

My name is Yakirah Kates, I am the Director of Internal Affairs for Oregonians Against Slavery and Involuntary Servitude (OASIS), and I am writing you today in support of SJR 10. I am writing to you today in support of SJR 10.

Slavery is a stain on our state and country's history. It upholds a legacy of racism, it is dehumanizing, and it is an antiquated practice. So antiquated, in fact, that 28 separate states either have or are in the process of removing the language from their own constitutions. If Oregon does not join the fold and take a stand against slavery, we will be on the wrong side of history.

I am proud to have worked with my colleagues, both incarcerated and not, on advocacy for SJR 10. To me, this bill represents several things. It represents hope for our future, as the oldest person on our staff is 23 and our youngest volunteer is 11. It represents the fight against racism, as more than half our team is Black and Black Americans are disproportionately affected by modern-day slavery. Lastly, SJR 10 represents an opportunity- the chance to do the right thing at a fork in the road of history. I dream that someday, I will be able to tell future generations that slavery was legal in my youth and be met with disbelief. I dream of a future where the conditions and shortcomings of our present carceral system are unimaginable. We can all be on the right side of history. We can work to mend our racist past. We can all build a better future.

Chair Bynum, Vice-Chairs Noble and Power, and the Committee, I urge you to do the right thing and vote yes on SJR 10. There should be no slavery or involuntary servitude: no exceptions.

Respectfully,  
Yakirah Kates