



May 6, 2021

House Judiciary Committee
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Testimony in Support of SJR 10¹: Amends Oregon Constitution to prohibit slavery

Chair Bynum, Vice Chairs Noble and Power, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon). We are a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of civil liberties and civil rights, with more than 28,415 members statewide. We are here today in support of SJR 10 in coalition with other advocates here this morning.

SJR 10 would remove the antiquated language of slavery from the Oregon Constitution. Currently, Article 1, Section 34 of our State Constitution reads, "There shall be neither slavery, nor involuntary servitude in the State, otherwise than as a punishment for crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted." This exception clause allows for the constitutional classification of incarcerated individuals as slaves, denying our incarcerated communities dignity and humanity, while perpetuating historic racism.

SJR 10 would remove this exception clause from the Oregon Constitution and finally do away with constitutionally permitted slavery in our state. Across the nation, four states have already removed this language, and eleven others are in the process of removing their slavery exception clauses. This change in language is an essential step towards amplifying the message that Oregon is committed to being actively anti-racist. We believe it is imperative that Oregon take this proactive step to demand a more just and equitable future, wherein everyone has the rights, resources, and recognition needed to thrive.

For these reasons, the ACLU of Oregon urges you to support SJR 10.

Thank you,

Chloe Becker
On behalf of the ACLU of Oregon

¹ <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2021R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/SJR10/Introduced>