

May 13th, 2021
House Committee on Judiciary
Re: Support for SJR 10

Chair Bynum, Vice Chairs Noble, and Power, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing today to ask for your support of SJR 10. This proposed amendment 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, as introduced, would remove this exception clause from the Oregon Constitution and finally do away with constitutionally permitted slavery in our state. This change in language is an essential step towards amplifying the message that Oregon is committed to being actively anti-racist.

SJR 10 is a simple action that would make a big difference. It will be humanizing for incarcerated people, and let Oregon be an example for the rest of the country. As an Oregon resident, I want to see this state take a stand for human dignity and racial justice by eliminating the slavery exception clause in our constitution

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. I urge this Committee to vote yes on SJR 10, as introduced, to ensure that slavery is truly a thing of the past.

In solidarity,
Anna McPherson