

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. This is unconscionable and should not exist in ANY state constitution language. With what has been happening in our world, socially, politically, and racially, over the past 15 months, Oregon should jump at the chance to remove this language.

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.

I moved to Oregon from North Carolina. I chose Oregon and Portland, specifically, because it seemed to be a welcoming and progressive place. Language such as this does not belong in the Oregon State Constitution, nor any other constitution in the United States, where everyone should be treated equally and fairly.

I 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,
Sarah Phillips