

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. This type of exception clause, both in our federal constitution and in those of the states, is what incentivizes our prison-for-profit mass incarceration system.

SJR 10, as introduced, would remove this exception clause from the Oregon Constitution and finally do away with constitutionally permitted slavery in our state. Oregon has a lot of work to do to rectify the deeply white supremacist history and resulting current inequities we are burdened with. This change in language is an essential step towards amplifying the message that Oregon is committed to being actively anti-racist.

We at Oregon DA for the People 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,
Madeline Carroll
Oregon DA for the People