

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. No child should grow up knowing that their incarcerated parent is legally classified as a slave.

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. This is Oregon's moment to be on the right side of history.

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.

SJR 10 is simple: this is about fundamental human rights and the necessity to remove slavery, **in any form**, from the language of the Oregon Constitution.

Thank you,

Mary Shivell

