

Isabela Villarreal
333 SE 2nd Ave.
Portland, OR 97214
RE: Support SJR 10



June 17, 2021

Chair Smith Warner, Vice Chairs Drazan and Holvey, and Member of the House Committee on Rules,

We are Next Up Action Fund, formerly known as the Bus Project, our mission is to build political power with diverse young people to achieve a more just and equitable Oregon. We envision an Oregon where young people boldly lead the state forward, our democracy is inclusive and accessible, and our communities are strong and resilient. We strongly support 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 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. Colorado (and other states) have created similar amendments which removed (or will remove) the language of slavery from their State Constitutions. 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.

We've seen across the U.S. similar ballot measures passing with strong numbers. In Colorado a similar ballot measure passed with 66.21% of the vote, Nebraska passed with 68.23% of the vote, and in Utah it passed with 80.48% of the vote.

Next Up Action Fund urges this Committee to vote yes on SJR 10 to ensure that slavery is truly a thing of the past.

Thank you,

Isabela Villarreal
Policy and Communications Manager