

Chair Smith Warner, Vice Chair Drazan and Holvey, and members of the Committee:

I am writing today to urge 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. Let's make the Constitution match the history our schools teach.

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.

This amendment matters to me as I wish to live in a world where the founding document that shapes the society around me does not have language that intentionally puts people into slavery. We can't move forward as a State unless we take down the language that holds us to the past. This is not forgetting but pushing to be better.

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 Chair Smith Warner to schedule a work session as quickly as possible and I urge the entire Community to vote yes on SJR 10 to ensure that slavery is truly a thing of the past.

In Solidarity,
Harriet Siqueland