

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher and Members of the Committee,

I write to enthusiastically support SB 571 and HB 2366, to restore voting rights to Oregonians in prison. Before moving to Portland last year, I worked in my hometown of Washington, DC as a case manager with formerly homeless men, many of whom had been incarcerated. For many of the individuals I worked with, reentry into their community was a difficult process, but having the support of others and the opportunity to civically engage was key to their success and stability. Along with Maine and Vermont, as of last year incarcerated individuals in DC are now allowed to vote, which has provided persons behind bars an easy new form of civic engagement. Having the ability to vote from prison is an invaluable tool that will help persons behind bars by increasing their ability for reintegration, reducing recidivism, and making communities safer. It has had a positive impact on the communities I used to work with in DC, and I know that if passed, this legislation will similarly have a positive impact on communities throughout Oregon. Since 95 percent of persons in prison return to their communities, restoring their voting rights is the best way for them to stay connected and to reenter as engaged and connected citizens. With the handful of states that have already passed similar reforms, Oregon can also lead the way. I urge you to vote yes on these bills!

Thank you,
Matthew Jordan