

Please note that I provided the following as oral testimony on Wednesday February 24th. However, I was mistakenly called during the public hearing on SB 571 when I was intending to speak on behalf of SJR 10. The following testimony is in support of SJR 10.

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and members of the Committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify this morning. For the record, my name is Jordan Schott and I am a Willamette alum. I am also a co-founder and the Director of Legislative Strategy for Oregonians Against Slavery and Involuntary Servitude, or OASIS. We are a grassroots organization fighting to end modern-day slavery in Oregon. OASIS is doing this by working to change the language of the Oregon Constitution to formally ban slavery and involuntary servitude of incarcerated persons, first and foremost through SJR 10. Through non-partisan coalition building and the centering of incarcerated voices, OASIS believes in creating a future that is more just for all Oregonians.

In the 2019 Session, myself and a few other Willamette students stumbled upon the exception clause in Article 1 Section 34 of the Oregon Constitution and were determined to change it. With the devoted support of the late Senator Jackie Winters, we brought this same proposed amendment forward during the 2019 session. Unfortunately, that bill died in committee, but this only reinvigorated our drive for change. In the spring of 2020, I took a class at Willamette University which brought students inside of Oregon State Penitentiary to attend class with a number of incarcerated individuals. It was in this class that I rededicated myself to ensuring that my classmates would never again be constitutionally considered slaves.

Over this past summer, amidst a global pandemic and a renewed fight for racial justice, myself and a number of other Willamette alum and incarcerated individuals came together to found OASIS. It is with this background that we proudly present SJR 10, a bill that we care deeply about. SJR 10, in conjunction with SJM 2, would amplify the message that Oregon is committed to being actively anti-racist. We believe it is imperative that Oregon take proactive steps to ensure that slavery is truly a thing of the past.

SJR 10 is an incredibly simple bill – fundamentally, all it does is remove the exception clause from Article 1 Section 34 of the Oregon Constitution. However, this proposed amendment has the potential to take a monumental step towards restoring the dignity and humanity that our incarcerated communities deserve. By changing this language, Oregon would do away with the antiquated racist legacy of slavery within our State’s most important document.

We are joined by a growing coalition of organizations across Oregon and the country in support of this movement, including the ACLU of Oregon, Urban League of Portland, Oregon Corrections Enterprises, Partnership for Safety and Justice, Asian Pacific American Network

of Oregon, Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon, Oregon Justice Resource Center, and Abolish Slavery National Network. We are also joined by a growing number of states across the nation who are taking similar steps to remove their own slavery exception clauses. We do not want Oregon to be left behind.

With that, I respectfully ask that the Committee review the submitted written testimony. I also know that there are a number of other testifiers signed up who will be able to dive more deeply into the necessity of this bill and the widespread positive impact it will have on our communities, both incarcerated and non-incarcerated, if passed. I urge this Committee to vote yes on SJR 10 to bring Oregon one step closer to a more just and equitable world. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

I want to thank the sponsors of this bill: Senators Manning and Frederick, and Representative Bynum, who sponsored this bill in the 2019 session and reintroduced this session, as well as Senators Wagner, Dembrow, Gelser, Riley, and Representatives Sollman and Steiner Hayward who have signed on to show their support this session.

- Jordan Schott