

Emily McCadden
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Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation
Support Senate Bill 571



February 24th, 2021

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation,

My name is Emily McCadden and I am a resident of Southeast Portland. I am a current graduate student at Portland State University's School of Social Work and I am an intern with Next Up Action Fund. I'm writing today in support of Senate Bill 571.

Laws that bar incarcerated people from voting have their roots in Jim Crow laws, which criminalized and suppressed Black people as a new form of social control after the abolition of slavery. Today mass incarceration has emerged as the modern form of social control. Supporting this argument is the reality that felonies and felony disenfranchisement laws have been inconsistently defined across the country and throughout time. The changeable nature of felony disenfranchisement laws have made them a powerful weapon against Black people, Indigenous people, people of color, and the poor to shut them out of political power.

One way that this is done is through disproportionate policing of Black and Brown communities. Here in Portland, OPB recently reported that PPB officers stop Black drivers at disproportionate rates compared to white drivers, despite the fact that Black drivers are less likely than white drivers to commit traffic violations. This is one local example in a trend of over policing of Black people that is linked to the violent legacy of slavery. Ultimately racism in policing is part of the system of criminalization and incarceration that leads to disproportionate disenfranchisement of Black and Brown Oregonians.

Furthermore, disenfranchisement is not linked to reduced crime or increased safety. People do not associate a prison sentence with the loss of the franchise. Nevertheless, millions of people are barred from voting each year due to voter disenfranchisement laws, including about 12,000 Oregonians incarcerated with felony convictions. Instead, disenfranchisement does further harm by cutting incarcerated people off from their communities and prohibiting them from holding policy makers accountable.

I firmly stand with Next Up Action Fund in calling for your support of this bill. Help Oregon make history as the first state to allow all incarcerated Oregonians to vote by passing Senate Bill 571.

Sincerely,
Emily McCadden
Next Up Action Fund