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VIA E-MAIL Senate Committee On Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation

Honorable Floyd Prozanski
Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation
Oregon Legislature
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Testimony of Juan Romero Jr. to Oregon Legislature in Support of SB 1511 on Nonunanimous Juries

Chair Prozanski and Members of the Committee,

My name is Juan Romero Jr. On May 6, 1999, by votes of 10-2 and 11-1, a jury voted to convict me of two counts of rape in the first degree and two counts of sodomy in the first degree. I was acquitted of sexual abuse in the first degree. It is therefore indisputable that I have served 21 years in prison on account of exclusively unconstitutional non-unanimous jury convictions for crimes I did not commit.

I am 76 years old. I served honorably in the United States Navy from 1962 to 1966, including service in the Vietnam War. Although government records identify me as white, and others often perceive me as Latino, I am Apache. Prior to my convictions by non-unanimous-verdict, I had no history of felony convictions. I have always maintained my innocence.

After my trial, one of the jurors alleged juror misconduct because multiple jurors who voted to convict relied upon personal experience rather than weighing the evidence. That juror's concerns were never addressed. Moreover, my attorney, now the Honorable Lorenzo A. Mejia, apologized to me on the record, saying that "something went terribly wrong" in my case.

I was in prison for over 20 years. I completed my sentence and was released on June 24, 2021. I have two daughters and a son, all of whom have remained supportive of me. Because of these unconstitutional convictions, I have missed over 20 years of their lives and the chance to spend time with my grandchildren. While I have been in prison, several members of my family, including my mother and father, aunts and

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uncles, cousins, and even a niece, have passed away, and I have been unable to attend their funerals or be with my family during those difficult times.

When I heard about *Ramos*, I thought my constitutional rights might finally be recognized, and that I would have a chance to clear my name. It seemed obvious that the Supreme Court was saying convictions like mine were unconstitutional, but apparently I may never get a chance to clear my name unless this Legislature intervenes. While I can never get the time in my life back, I could have my name cleared of these crimes and be eligible to spend the rest of my life near my children, who live in states far away.

I was sad to hear about the Court's opinion in *Edwards*. Since my release, without a remedy from an Oregon court or the Legislature, I still have parole. I am not able to move to Nebraska to live with my daughter, I am not able to spend time with my grandchildren or great grandchildren until they turn 18, and I will still have these crimes associated with me until someone acknowledges that my convictions were wrong.

All I want is a chance to live the rest of my life as an elderly man with my family in peace without this cloud hanging over me. Senate Bill 1511 can give me that chance. Thank you for your attention.

Testimony by Juan Romero Jr., signed by attorneys for Juan Romero Jr.

Sincerely,

/s/ Danny Newman
Danny Newman

/s/ Timothy Wright
Timothy Wright

