

Submitter: Trish Garner
On Behalf Of: Self
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure: SB579

April 27, 2023

To: Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher and Members of the Committee.
RE: Senate Bill 579 - Support

Although I have for the last 8 years served as the State Public Policy Chair for the American Association of University Women of Oregon, I have stepped down from that position and this testimony comes from me solely in my personal capacity.

I have served both as an Assistant United States Attorney and a private criminal defense lawyer and have experience with both sides of the criminal justice system. I have interacted with individuals in prison or jail, those on probation and felons who have served their sentences.

In my experience fostering a sense of dignity and inclusion is key to the re-integration of individuals who are either in prison or remain felons but are no longer incarcerated. Not being able to vote significantly impairs the ability of these individuals to accomplish this challenging task.

The right to vote represents the very essence of the democracy we strive to achieve. That right should be extended to all citizens. It encourages a sense of ownership, responsibility, and allegiance to our country and its values.

It is also the case that the United States' rate of incarceration is higher than in other countries. It disproportionately effects those who are poor and can't afford the kind of legal representation that is available to those who can pay for it. This imbalance is also reflected in the high proportion of people of color, and particularly our Black citizens, in the criminal justice system.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that you support Senate Bill 579.

Thank you,

Trish Garner
Portland, Oregon