



TO: Senate Committee on Judiciary
FROM: Mae Lee Browning, Oregon Criminal Defense Lawyers Association
DATE: January 26, 2023
RE: Support Guaranteeing the Right to Vote, SB 579

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Mae Lee Browning. I represent the Oregon Criminal Defense Lawyers Association. OCDLA's 1,200 members statewide include public defense providers, private bar attorneys, investigators, experts, and law students. Our attorneys represent Oregon's children and parents in juvenile dependency proceedings, youth in juvenile delinquency proceedings, adults in criminal proceedings at the trial and appellate level, as well as civil commitment proceedings throughout the state of Oregon. Our mission is championing justice, promoting individual rights, and supporting the legal defense community through education and advocacy.

We are part of a broad coalition that has the support of over 40 civil rights organizations, faith-based groups, as well as dozens of currently and formerly incarcerated people. **I am writing to testify in strong support for Guaranteeing the Right to Vote, SB 579.**

In order to successfully reintegrate people who are no longer incarcerated back into our communities, we must invest in our community's well-being. **Establishing social bonds in one's community highly increases the chances of successful re-entry, greatly reducing the number of people returning to prison, and improves public safety for all.** More than 95% of incarcerated people will re-enter society after completing their sentence – they'll work, go to school, raise families, and pay taxes in their communities. Making sure Oregonians can vote while incarcerated allows them to feel involved in their communities and increases the success of reintegration when they come back.

Mass incarceration damages our communities. It divides families, harms children, and diverts resources away from other community needs. To reverse that harm, we need to keep people from re-entering the criminal legal system. We know that civic engagement reduces the likelihood that someone returns to prison again because they feel connected to their community. By restoring voting rights to incarcerated people, we reduce recidivism and make our society stronger.

Legislation is best shaped by directly impacted people - Guaranteeing the Right to Vote emerged from community conversations with currently and formerly incarcerated people about the importance of voting and civic responsibility.



Guaranteeing the Right to Vote fulfills the promise of our democracy while improving public safety and addressing racial and socioeconomic inequities. As a representative of OCDLA, we ask that you please support SB 579 and pass it out of committee.

Thank you,

Mae Lee Browning (she/her)
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