



Oregon Commission on Black Affairs

Advocating for Equity and Diversity throughout Oregon

Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Weber, and members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Dr. Silky Booker, I honorably served in the United States Air Force, founded the Oregon Black Chamber of Commerce, and currently serve as the Vice Chair of the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs.

The Oregon Commission on Black Affairs (OCBA) serves the people of Oregon to empower and support the African American and Black community through our unique roles as policy advisors to Oregon state policymakers and leaders. OCBA is a catalyst that allows partnerships between the state government and our community in rural and urban areas to ensure success for *all* African American and Black Oregonians by addressing longstanding and emerging issues at the policy level. Our work is driven to implement economic, social, legal, and political equality in seven strategic priority areas: Education; jobs & the economy; healthcare; justice, safety, and policing; stable families and housing; environmental Justice; and civic engagement.

Today, I write to you in support of Senate Bill 517, which would prohibit licensing boards, commissions, or agencies from denying, suspending, or revoking occupational or professional licenses solely for conviction of a crime or qualifying juvenile adjudication that does not substantially relates to duties and responsibilities for which the license is required.

As policy advisors to this legislature, it is our statutory duty to ensure you are aware of the impact legislation can have on Black communities. Measure 11 is one of those butterfly effect pieces of history. Since Measure 11 – more commonly known as the “one strike and you’re out” measure – was enacted, it has disproportionately impacted Black men and young Black boys. This is evident in the sheer number of incarcerated individuals in Oregon.

While Black Oregonians make up less than three percent of the population, we account for more than 10 percent of its prison and jail cells. The Vera Institute for Justice found that nearly one in every five Black men will be incarcerated in their lifetime.

Each of those occupied jail cells account for a criminal offense – a felony – on the hard work of Black Oregonians.

Conversely, SB 517 gives people a second chance. People who may have had a felony on their record, who historically could not be appointed to boards, commissions, or be a part of an agency. This

**Oregon Commission on
Black Affairs**

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<https://www.oregonadvocacy.org/> 

503.302.9725 

oaco.mail@oregon.gov 

PO Box 17550, Portland, OR 97217 

legislation would provide a second chance to rebuild our lives, get jobs, be welcomed back into our communities, and be productive members of society.

While serious crimes cannot be ignored and justice must be served, far too many Black Oregonians – and especially Black boys and men – are racially profiled, set up, or outright convicted for the sole reason being their skin color.

That is a justice system that is in dire need of an update.

My career achievements have enabled me to be a powerful, dynamic, and influential voice for Black people worldwide – and right here in Oregon – and create opportunities for those in need. This is one of those critical opportunities. I strongly urge the Committee’s support of SB 517.


Thank you,




Silky Booker



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