

Submitter: Isabela Villarreal

On Behalf Of: Jacob Singleton

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Measure: Support SB 579, Guaranteeing the Right to Vote

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Guaranteeing the Right to Vote,

Thank you for reaching out to me, and for all of your efforts on behalf of incarcerated people. I am definitely willing to help in any way that I can.

Q1: ***Have you voted in the past? If not, what kept you from voting in past elections?***

A1: I have never had the opportunity to vote. In 1998 I ^{was} arrested (at the age of 17) and charged as an adult (under Measure 11). I have spent the last 25 years in prison without the right to vote.

Q2: ***Do you support this legislation?***

A2: I do, I think that it's important for everyone to have a voice.

Q3: ***What would it mean to you to be able to vote in prison?***

A3: It would mean a great many things. Beyond giving each of us a voice, it also means that politicians would have to, at least to some extent remember that we are human beings, and a part of the community. It would, hopefully nudge law makers into the realization that it's not about being "Tough", or "Soft" on crime, but about being Smart on crime.

Q4: ***Why does voting matter to you?***

A4: Despite the fact that I grew up in prison, I care about, and will be part of the community very soon. I also have people already in the community that I care about. The right to vote gives us a mechanism to make sure that the community is safe, that peoples rights are being respected, and that those in the community can live their lives in a way that is consistent with their values.

Q5: ***What would it mean to you to be able to vote right now?***

A5: It would mean that I was part of the social contract. It would mean that I couldn't complain of being powerless, and having no say in the way our society is ran. It would mean that if I saw an injustice, and I write to my local politicians that it would benefit them to actually take my words into account, whether they agreed with them or not. The list goes on 😊

Q6: ***If you could tell the legislature something, what would you tell them?***

A6: I was a Junior in High school when I came to prison. The Oregon Dept of Corrections is not set up to encourage positive growth, or to help inmates become people who you wouldn't mind as neighbors. If we are going to move in the direction of being smart on crime, you need to be able to hear a great many voices, and some of those voices need to come from people like me who have unfortunately been a part of that system. I don't believe we can keep on pretending that what we are doing is working, we have to ask ourselves what exactly we are trying to achieve, and how we plan to actually go about achieving it. Giving everyone a voice, and actually listening to what those voices are saying is a great step ^{Toward} upon all of us being a community.

Thank you for reaching out, please let me know of any way that I can help, now or in the future.

-Jacob Singleton