

Submitter: Denise Cedar
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

May 3, 2023

Dear Co-Chairs Sen Steiner and Rep. Sanchez, and all Members of the Joint Ways and Means Committee:

My name Denise Cedar and I am proud to be an Oregonian. Thank you for serving in our legislature.

I am grateful for the opportunity to provide testimony on Oregon's funding priorities.

I registered to submit oral testimony and received a link to do so but today the website said no remote testimony is being accepted. This is why I was unable to submit my written testimony in advance or to speak when my name was called during session.

I am submitting testimony as an ACLU advocate to speak about the ACLU of Oregon's 2023 Legislative Agenda -- and why these are important issues for ALL Oregonians.

Three of the top priorities which I personally want to address today are:

1. Ensuring fairness in our criminal justice system by investing in a well-supported public defense workforce (SB 337 and HB 2467)
2. Ensuring that our legislators are paid a livable wage (SB 786) which will support a wider variety or diversity of citizens able to serve in this manner.
3. Restoring voting rights for people in prisons (SB 579).

I urge you to provide funding for these priorities in order to make the State of Oregon stronger and more democratic for all.

A few reasons why I, personally, support these priorities:

1) SB 337 and HB 2467: Everyone deserves the right to high quality representation when facing criminal charges. This is one of the most important pillars of democracy. Low-income people and people of color often suffer from lack of representation due to a lack of public defense resources. This leaves them in legal limbo for unconscionable lengths of time.

Government's role is to serve, protect and represent the people. We must fund the public defense system so we can hire new attorneys and support existing ones, preserving valuable talent and experience.

2) SB 786: Oregon has some of the lowest wages for legislators in the country – we can do better! A state is far more democratic if representation is not limited solely to those who can afford to represent their districts for little remuneration because they have sufficient other income.

Even as a citizen with a professional degree, I still could not afford to serve my district and my state if I had the desire. Busy parents, people who work low-income jobs, people on disability, and many people of color or from marginalized groups face financial barriers to serving.

All classes and backgrounds of Oregonians deserve the opportunity to be represented by people like ourselves.

Let us make Oregon a better example of “government by the people and for the people”.. True representation builds patriotism!

3) SB 579 Restore voting rights for people in prisons. People in prison are already paying their debt to society by serving their sentence. A prison sentence should not remove their citizenship rights. It is a matter of simple justice.

It is also in everyone’s best interest for citizens serving prison sentences to feel part of society when released in order to reduce/prevent recidivism. The ability to vote is essential to feeling a stake in our society.

I strongly urge you to fund SB 337, HB 2467 and SB 786 in the next biennial state budget.

Thank you for your consideration and your service to the State of Oregon,

Denise Cedar