

Submitter: Isabela Villarreal

On Behalf Of: Jeff Traxtle

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Measure: Support Guaranteeing the Right to Vote, SB 579

To Next Up staff

Hello, how are you all doing on this fine day? I hope that you are all in good spirits! I am doing good.

A fellow inmate / AIC (Adult In Custody) shared your information with me, then days later I get your helping hand. He knows how important being humanized is to many of us who reside behind this temporary borderland. I would like to provide you with the support that I can give. be it in writing or by phone. Anything that I write can be utilized in any way that you would like. I appreciate the opportunity to have my voice heard and the ability to speak up for those who don't have a voice or who don't know how to vocalize their thoughts or desires.

I have voted in the past and as I get older, there is a need for informed people to vote and not just complain about the things that are happening. I may not be fully informed on every aspect of the bills and laws being proposed, but I can provide insight on the effects that others may not have. Incarceration limits the ability to be informed, but the DOC or company that operates our tablet system, could put the bills or laws on the tablets for us to read. In turn we can provide insight to family and friends that may not have the time or understanding to decipher the information. This would generate positive conversations by mail, phone or in person visits.

I support this legislation because it affirms the belief in people that they are heard, as well as it can teach them lessons in life. Voting is something society does and more people should be voting to see the changes they desire. Often times, people think that their vote won't matter and the law makers will do what they want, but this could help pass initiatives so they can see the change. Just the fact that our voices are being considered, is inspiring. To humanize inmates who will be returning to society one day, and showing them a positive way to get change without riots or criminal activity is vital to rehabilitation.

Having my voting rights restored while in prison would be humanizing. To be cut off from society or relinquished to just a number; detracts from my humanity. I am a human being that works, takes college classes with students from the University of Oregon and I volunteer in the community in which I reside. I would be able to inform the people on issues that they might not have any insight on or a skewed view of what someone told them. For me, voting is being heard and generates thoughts in others to possibly take a look at another perspective.

Voting matters to me because "we" the people should collectively make our state better. By not voting, people only consent to the injustices that they might disagree with or complain about. We may not agree on everything but we can find solutions that lead us to a middle ground. Matters that affect the incarcerated population will be voted on with our voices being heard and not just what a specific group of people think should happen; which really have no insight to the affects their decisions would have.

Being able to vote right now could literally affect the life and death of people. Humans change throughout life and the adverse situations that we endure or overcome affect our change; the same applies to people who have rehabilitated themselves over a period of years of incarceration. I do not think like the 21-year old kid who entered prison as a naïve young kid. Being able to vote could be the pebble thrown into the water that has a ripple effect beyond my own vision.

I would ask the legislature to partner up with the OJRC (Oregon Justice Resource Center), the Lewis & Clark Law School directed by Aliza Kaplan, the State's Ombudsman Mr. Wolf, and come into the prisons to have a group dialogue. There are some Legislatures that have and those

people were affected by what they witnessed and heard from just a few incarcerated men. There is enough time and space to have multiple groups participating at one time, like a round table of rooms with inmates / AIC's (Adults In Custody) to discuss policies and the changes needed to be made. Another option is to do a zoom meeting, so everyone can log on and be a part of the questions and answers. That would require someone to FORCE the D.O C. (Department Of Corrections) to allow the education rooms and computer/TV to be utilized without repercussions to what we say. Most of the time we are moved to other institutions and treated poorly when we speak out against the D.O.C., be it the misuse of funds, excessive force or the dehumanization that takes place daily. There IS some great and professional staff members that facilitate a positive change, but they face persecution by their own colleagues for agreeing with an inmate / AIC. I say that to highlight the need to decrease the prison population by rehabilitating people to be valuable members of society and breaking the cycle of criminality, homelessness, and reallocating those funds utilized on prisons to other entities such as education and crime prevention at the root, our children.

I can provide information on programs that would facilitate change and further rehabilitate the incarcerated people. The financials are very little due to the volunteers that desire to come in here and help create an environment for change and healing. It takes the Legislature to force the change through policy and to ensure that the D.O.C. complies. Better human beings leaving prison, more prepared humans, means that they don't return to criminal activity and in turn they work and pay taxes. We need lessen the burden on the State and have more responsible people returning into society.

I thank you for your time and consideration. I hope that something I have said can be of value to you or anyone who reads this. I appreciate the opportunity to be heard and I have a lot more to say, but you probably already have a high volume of input. Please contact me anytime.

Sincerely,  
  
Jeff Traxtle

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