



**PARTNERSHIP FOR
SAFETY & JUSTICE**

**Submitted to the Senate Committee on Judiciary
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February 28, 2024
Testimony in Opposition to SB 1553**

Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Andersen and Wallan, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to SB 1553.

At Partnership for Safety and Justice, we advocate for public safety and criminal justice policies that ensure accountability, equity, and healing for people convicted of crime, crime survivors, and the families and communities of both. For 25 years, our work has promoted public safety with policies that keep families together, reduce racial disparities, and invest in communities across Oregon.

All Oregonians can agree on the importance of both protecting transit workers and riders. Transit workers do incredibly important work, and ensuring safe and accessible public transit is a shared value for all of us.

The bill proposes adding the consumption of a controlled substance to the existing “Interfering with Public Transit” statute. Such conduct would be considered a Class A misdemeanor under the statute, carrying the possibility of up to a year in jail. As is evidenced by the failed war on drugs, increased penalties do not prevent drug use or help people struggling with addiction.

Users of public transit are often disproportionately Oregonians of color and those with low-incomes. Imposition of increased criminal penalties will disproportionately impact these riders who rely on public transit. There are other solutions that could both keep our communities safe and not create the additional barriers that jail and criminalization bring to stable housing, jobs and healing.

It is important for us to keep transit workers safe. We believe there are other ways to invest in worker and workplace safety that do not rely on the imposition of such criminal penalties.