

Submitter: Hannah Dunn
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2851

I have serious concerns regarding House Bill 2851 and the -1 Amendment. I oppose this bill.

Federal, state, and local governments have a well-documented, very-long history of invoking terrorism and related laws to surveil and target black and brown communities and silence those who engage in political dissent – including racial and environmental justice activists.

The Trump administration had ICE detain Mahmoud Khalil, a green card holder and Columbia University STUDENT this past week. The White House said that Khalil distributed pro-Hamas flyers on Columbia's campus. This indicates that Trump is punishing Khalil for engaging in protected First Amendment activities and that it is the unproven allegation of terrorism and nothing more that is being used by Trump to detain Khalil and revoke his green card. They have called him a terrorist when he is actually just expressing his compassion for Palestinian people who are dying by genocide. He is about to be a father. He is a student. He was peacefully protesting with his community. He is not a "terrorist."

This administration loosely and dangerously uses language like "terrorism" regarding anyone who speaks up about the plight and genocide of the Palestinian people. It's a tactic that has been used against political dissenters in this country for a very long time. I have serious concerns that this administration, if they haven't already, will start to gather information about anyone who speaks up about any of the numerous injustices that are being inflicted upon the American people at the hands of this administration.

During this time when the language of "terrorism" is being used to destroy American democracy, Oregon should be rolling back and not expanding so-called terrorism laws.

Since political violence is already criminalized under other state and federal laws, state domestic terrorism laws are arguably unnecessary. In addition, these laws create serious, and often underappreciated, civil liberties concerns, particularly in relation to the freedoms of speech, assembly, and association. State domestic terrorism laws are frequently overbroad and trigger severe penalties that have been used in multiple states to target individuals, including nonviolent activists, in activity not typically associated with terrorism. (<https://www.justsecurity.org/99787/state-domestic-terrorism-laws>)

Our state should be a national model in protecting democracy, speech, and protest. However, when state lawmakers passed HB 2772, the underlying domestic terrorism law in 2023, Oregon alarmingly went in the wrong direction. Let us not continue down that wrong direction.

I don't want to be scared to peacefully spread awareness and my opinions about the causes I feel passionately about, and right now I do.

At the very least, state lawmakers should amend the underlying domestic terrorism bill to make clear that it does not penalize or criminalize constitutionally protected activities including free speech and protest.