

Submitter: Tanaz Polson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2851

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

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. These laws are ripe for abuse and unnecessary because we already have criminal laws that sanction harm to property.

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. Our members and supporters agreed – they sent more than 15,000 messages to state lawmakers opposing HB 2772.

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.

Currently, we are seeing Trump weaponizing terrorism laws and language to silence dissent and destroy American democracy. Last Saturday, the Trump administration had ICE detain Mahmoud Khalil, a green card holder and Columbia University student. On Tuesday, 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.

This week, Trump also threatened to expand domestic terrorism laws by considering vandalism against Tesla as terrorism.

Why are Oregon lawmakers considering anti-democracy frames being weaponized by Trump?

Our serious concerns about the harmful expansion of domestic terrorism laws are shared by many pro-democracy organizations who have shared their concerns about similar laws – from

Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights to NAACP to the National Bar Association and many more.

Similarly,

more than 20 Oregon organizations opposed HB 2772, including Urban League of Portland, PCUN, Sierra Club, and more.

In these dangerous times, the ACLU of Oregon urges state lawmakers to stop using the terrorism framework that has been consistently weaponized against our democracy.

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