



Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee:

My name is Ty Schwoeffermann, with the Urban League of Portland and I am here today to testify in support of the Oregon Public Safety Package, HB 3194.

HB 3194 is important to the Urban League because the time to address both the inequities and the inefficiencies in the Oregon's public safety system is long overdue. It's a conversation that is taking place in many other states, and we welcome it here. Since Measure 11 and Measure 57 the prison population has doubled, taking a severe toll in human cost and to the cost of public services, including actual law enforcement.

The African American community has a huge stake in public safety reform. African Americans make up about 2% of Oregon's general population but 9.5% of our prison system. Black youth make up 4% of Oregon's youth general population but 19% of Oregon's Measure 11 indictments.

A majority of these are for non-violent offenses, where the offender and the community would have been better served through treatment and prevention programs; or job training and support systems. Not only is Oregon facing a ballooning \$600 million price tag in escalating incarceration, our community face a loss in human capital of men and women who could be contributing to the development and sustainability of our community, but are too often costly to our society through unemployment, inability to adequately support families and recidivism.

What would it look like if we were investing in the communities that send large percentages of people to the state prison system? It seems like this investing in the types of community infrastructure, best designed to build safe and healthy communities, would lend itself to both less crime but also less racial disparity in the prison population.

What if we spent as much money on victim services, community corrections, addiction and mental health and re-entry services as we do on prisons? How many crimes could we prevent? We could focus on education and generating meaningful jobs instead of sequestering a disproportionate number of African American men, women and juveniles as possible in our prisons for longer and longer stretches of time.

We have an important opportunity here to realign our priorities to ensure that we have an accountable public safety system for those who commit crimes, but one that invests in prevention and strong communities.

HB 3194 has the right balance. Thank you for this opportunity to testify. Again, I ask your support for HB 3194 and I urge the Committee to move this package forward.