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To: House Committee on Judiciary
From: Lupe Partida
RE: HB 2355

Chair Barker, Vice-Chairs Olson and Williamson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lupe Partida and I am a first-generation Latina college student at the University of Oregon and I am with the Oregon student association, thank you for your time. I am here to urge you to vote yes on HB 2355. I would like to begin with a personal experience within my small community in Southern Oregon in a town called White City Oregon. In White City 18.9% of families and 21.1% of the population live below the poverty line. My community is constantly aggressively policed, racially profiled, and criminalized. Just recently, I found out that at a local grocery store in my community authorities raided people asking for identification, looking to see who was "Latino" and who is not. Due to this, my community does not trust law enforcement and because police brutality is a reality for my people.

Authorities need to stop profiling individual's identity and migration status because racially profiling is illegal and we do not need a war on immigration when the war of drugs has disproportionately affected many people of color already. The failed war on drugs has influenced my neighborhood with more drugs and many of my friends have fell into them. My stepfather was one of those people and he received a drug felony without treatment. Upon release, he has not been able to find employment. We must reduce drug felonies to misdemeanors because the war on drugs has failed my people.

Recently the University of Oregon, just like many universities, have added the question onto the application process if the individual has ever received a felony. This is going to make it harder for people like my step-dad, with a drug felony to receive a higher education. Not only will individuals be haunted with a record due to the criminalization of substance abuse in society, they will remain disadvantaged through another institution. One of those institutions also happens to me the prison -industrial complex because half of the people in federal prisons are serving time for a drug offense. This is creating an economic burden on people living inside these institutions and outside. We need to decriminalize drugs because people completing treatment can become productive members of society much more easily than convicted felons. Rehabilitation is less expensive than incarceration and individuals with substance abuse problems are much more likely to find recovery in rehab than in jail. I urge you to support HB 2355 and thank you for your time.