

Thank you Chair Prozanski, and members of the committee for allowing me this opportunity to speak in support of divesting from private prisons.

I'm Suzanne Cohen a proud **public** school teacher, with the privilege of serving as President of Portland Association of Teachers representing over 4,000 educators.

Around this time last year, The Oregon Education Association passed a resolution (NBI 18, 2016) to lobby for the Oregon Investment Council and the State Treasurer to divest PERS from stocks that are related to any and all private prison operations.

We did this, because educators see the impacts that prison and detention systems have on our youth and families. Specifically, the harm private prisons have on our most vulnerable populations.

Private prisons aren't run as well as public facilities. They often cut back on staffing costs, provide fewer hours of staff training, have higher inmate-to-staff ratios.

They don't deliver on the promised cost savings and profits come at the expense of inmates' health and well-being. Cost cutting can lead to human rights abuses and increases in violence.

Corporations that invest in private prisons are profiting from the mass incarceration of millions of people. And these people are disproportionately people of color, our black and immigrant communities.

As educators, we can't stand to support corporations that are profiting off of human abuse. That's why we supported Portland City Council and the decision to divest City of Portland investments from companies with large holdings in private prisons. We hope the same can be done at the state level and we encourage Oregon to take action.

Thank you very much for your time.