



ACLU of Oregon Urges a Yes Vote on HB 2355

The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon¹ supports HB 2355, which will identify and reduce patterns of profiling by law enforcement through statewide stop data collection and mandatory anti-profiling training, as well as defelonize small-scale possession of drugs.

The ACLU of Oregon supports HB 2355 as a crucial opportunity for law enforcement and our criminal justice system to keep communities safe and treat people fairly, regardless of their age, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, language, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, political affiliation, religion, homelessness or disability.

Profiling is fundamentally unfair, because it is based on false assumptions, implicit bias, and broadly accepted stereotypes. When profiling occurs, it harms our communities and causes people to lose trust in the system. Statewide stop data collection, mandatory anti-profiling training for all levels of law enforcement, and accountability when patterns of profiling are identified will reduce these damaging effects on our communities.

The failed War on Drugs not only failed, but it has also fueled profiling and amplified racial disparities in our criminal justice system. Despite the fact that people of color possess drugs at roughly the same rates as everyone else, they are much more likely to face arrest and conviction. That is why HB 2355 includes drug policy reform to decrease the penalty for possession of small amounts of controlled substances from a felony to a misdemeanor.

Harsh drug sentences have damaged families and ruined lives. A felony conviction can prevent people from successfully reentering our communities. People with such convictions face barriers to housing, employment and education. HB 2355 will move Oregon toward treating drugs as a public health issue and reduce the harsh collateral consequences of possession convictions.

Oregon is ready to join the 18 other states which have already defelonized small-scale possession. An overwhelming majority of Oregon voters, of all political parties and backgrounds, support reducing drug sentences. Oregonians know we need to be smarter. That means doing what's most effective—better access to treatment, education and rehabilitation, not harsher punishments.

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¹ The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of civil liberties and civil rights, with more than 43,000 members in the State of Oregon.