



House Committee on Rules
Re: HB 2492 Relating to redistricting

March 18, 2019

Dear Chair Holvey, Vice-Chair Williamson, Vice-Chair Wilson, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 2492. My name is Jenny Lee and I am the Advocacy Director for Building Power for Communities of Color, a nonprofit dedicated to policy advocacy for communities of color to help us achieve a more equitable Oregon.

We are in support of this legislation to create a stronger democracy where representation is accurately distributed on the basis of population. HB 2492 would change Oregon's redistricting law to align with the constitutional provision that incarcerated individuals are represented by legislators from their home communities.

Oregonians of color are disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system, and counting them in the district that actually represents them is sensible and fair. Current law distorts representation in our democracy, both in districts where the individual last resided and the district containing the prison or jail.

People who are currently incarcerated have home communities, with ties to their family, friends and neighbors. A prison is not a residence, and by Oregon statute, individuals will reenter the last community they resided in. During their incarceration, the district where they previously resided is likely to better represent the individual's interests than the district with a prison or jail.

It is critical that we address this inconsistency in Oregon law in time for the upcoming redistricting cycle. This legislation is an important step toward a fairer and more representative democracy where everyone is counted in the right district.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2492 and we respectfully urge your support of this legislation.

Respectfully,

Jenny Lee
Advocacy Director
Building Power for Communities of Color

