



March 1, 2021

Oregon Senate
Salem, Oregon 97301
Senate Committee On Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW) strongly supports the passage of SB 704 which would prohibit the use of the “gay or transgender panic defense” by a criminal defendant to justify the use of violence against the victim based on discovery of the victim’s sexual orientation or gender identity. One of NOW’s core issues is “fighting bigotry against the LGBTQ community”. Allowing a “panic defense” legitimizes prejudices against LGBTQ people and sends the message that crimes against LGBTQ people aren’t as serious as crimes against “straight” cisgender individuals. It says that the lives of LGBTQ people are less valuable than those of “straight” people.

Oregon has a reputation of valuing the equality of all our residents. Allowing a defendant to use a victim’s sexual orientation or gender identity as an excuse for perpetrating violence against that person devalues the victim, making him/her “less a person”.

Oregon NOW urges that Oregon follow the lead of Washington, California, Colorado and several other states and pass SB 704 which would prohibit the LGBTQ “panic defense”.

Respectfully,

Christine Chin Ryan
President, Oregon NOW

H. Rebecca Callison
Legislative Chair, Oregon NOW