



Testimony in Support of HB 2366
March 8, 2021
House Committee on judiciary
Akil S. Patterson, MLS

Greetings, Chair Smith Warner, Vice-Chair Drazan, and members of the committee.

My name is Akil Patterson, and I serve as the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) Political Organizer.

Today I submit, to the committee, testimony in support of HB 2366 on behalf of ONA's 15,000 registered nurses, the Nurse Practitioners of Oregon, and professional member affiliates throughout the state. I am honored to represent them and serve as a voice for our member organization.

ONA supports our members and professional associates; Our purpose for supporting this legislation is to ensure that representation matters. To ensure that all communities have a voice in their care, all organizations have a say in how they are treated. We know and understand that some people accused to have commit heinous violent felonies against another human have frequently been those who should not have their rights restored. Yet most felons or people with felony convictions are far more likely to have accepted plea bargains and plea deals or that the defendant did not have money to mount an affirmative defense. We do not turn away people from care or care that will fix their issue because of a lack of ability to pay, this is no different, and we must embrace people's right to vote.

Fundamentally speaking, our constitution under the ratification of its 14th amendment allows due process. If you were to take the reading strictly, section 2 sets out how our representatives are selected, which to this day is not challenged, but somehow we allow the census numbers that reflect how many representatives we have in congress and in the state legislator yet we do not give the grace to allow those inmates in jail with Felonies to not vote?

The constitution allows incarceration and can suspend some rights, but in the constitution, the same 14th amendment, we are supposed to afford them due process. We do not get that here, the constitution does not allow for states to abridge a person's rights without due process and there is no clear language which shows that there has been a process where someone can challenge the courts for specific voting rights related to incarceration.

ONA believes that this legislation seeks only to improve access to voting and ensure that all people can vote regardless of where they are in life, and we ask that this committee move this bill favorable on behalf of Oregonians.