




## OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon

2788 SE 82nd Ave., #203 Portland, OR 97266 

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OPALpdx.org 

Chair Power, Vice-Chair Wallan, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Civil Law,

I write today on behalf of the Board, staff, and membership of OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon to voice our support of HB 2482. This is an important step toward prioritizing the safety of communities of color on public transportation. Police officers should not be in the business of inspecting transit fares.

Founded in 2006 by and for people of color and low income individuals, OPAL is the grassroots-driven hub at the center of Oregon's movement for Environmental Justice. We develop community members' leadership skills and motivate them to take action. Together, we lead campaigns, impact public processes, and win victories in policy and procedure to achieve a safe and healthy environment where we live, work, learn, play, and pray. We have a 15-year history of making change at all levels of decision-making, from neighborhood-scale improvements to federal policy shifts. OPAL has a long history of organizing the bus riding public, youth of color, and other groups historically excluded from decision-making processes impacting their lives. We organize people who use public transit, depend on public transit, and are not often asked about how public transit is serving them. We board buses and trains and talk to those who depend upon the system about how well it is serving them.

A policy of sweeping fare enforcement searches violates the constitutional rights of transit riders. This practice exacerbates disparities in the criminal justice system and contributes to the over-policing and over-prosecution of people of color, people with disabilities, and people experiencing homelessness and other forms of economic insecurity. Leaders should never support policies which give law enforcement the right to "stop and frisk" transit riders or to arbitrarily request proof of immigration status, "show me your papers," yet giving the power to inspect for transit fare to police is comparable to these injustices. We are here to correct that.

HB 2482 has a narrow and specific scope. It removes the ability of police officers to act as fare enforcement. It does not prevent them from having a presence on public transit stations and or vehicles. It does not remove the ability of transit employees to address public safety concerns. It mitigates the risk of racial profiling by addressing how individuals identify themselves and removes the risk of over criminalization for transit riders who don't have proof of fare payment for whatever reason.



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The issue at hand is a basic question of priority. Police officers are supposed to protect and serve the public. Yet police officers in cities with public transit are also allowed under current law to inspect for transit fares. This enforcement is unevenly targeted at low income riders, youth, and Black and Brown people. We know this because of Bus Riders Unite, the OPAL membership base which has consistently reported police profiling on public transit as an issue worthy of consideration and public policy change.

HB 2482 removes fare enforcement from the long list of expectations of law enforcement officers. This bill will support building a transit system that will be more accessible and center the needs of transit dependent communities. We ask you to join us, and with the growing ranks of the transportation and racial justice advocacy community, in supporting passage of HB 2482.

Sincerely,

Huy Ong, Executive Director  
OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon