



Smart policies for today's families.

March 18, 2021

Chair Bynum, Vice-Chairs Noble and Power, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2169. Family Forward Oregon strongly supports HB 2169 to improve public safety in Oregon and reform our criminal justice system by adopting the recommendations of the Racial Justice Council. Our organization focuses on strengthening the economic security of mothers, caregivers, parents, and families through bold policies. As members of the Fair Shot For All Coalition we support this bill as part of our ongoing work towards achieving racial and gender justice in Oregon.

HB 2169 includes recommendations from the Criminal Justice Reform & Police Accountability Committee of the Governor's Racial Justice Council. In response to the long overdue national and local uprising for racial justice sparked by the death of George Floyd in 2020, the Council is moving Oregon forward by centering Black, Indigenous, Latinx, people of color and immigrant voices in the development of public safety policy solutions.

Women and mothers in particular, are entering the criminal justice system in increasing numbers due to the effects of gender-based discrimination, poverty, trauma, abuse and institutional racism. According to an article by the Statesman Journal, the number of women imprisoned in Oregon has nearly tripled over the past 20 years, even though women are not committing more frequent or more serious crimes.<sup>1</sup> Racial disparities are clear among justice-involved women—In 2016, the U.S imprisonment rate for Black women was twice that of white women, and the imprisonment rate for Latinx women was 1.4 times that of white women.<sup>2</sup>

The deep trauma of living in a culture of white supremacy and systemic racism has created widespread harm that impacts all of us and that we must urgently address in 2021 and on. We can start with HB 2169. The proposed reforms in HB 2169 would accomplish the following:

- **Promote restorative justice:** Encourage greater use of restorative justice practices with funding provided to the Criminal Justice Commission
- **Prevent unnecessary deportations:** Make diversion possible for immigrants accused of crime, so they can perform community service, pay restitution and/or receive treatment in their community, rather than automatic deportation and traumatic family separation.
- **Expand police oversight:** Authorize the creation of a police oversight agency or board by city and county governments

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/news/crime/2017/02/16/oregon-faces-skyrocketing-female-prison-population/98012786/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.herstoryoregon.org/increasing-incarceration-rates>

- **Improve transparency:** Improve public access to personnel files for police officers who have been investigated for misconduct
- **Require police identification:** Require law enforcement officers to inform a stopped person of reason for the stop and that they have the right to refuse a request to search
- **Ensure informed police searches:** Require law enforcement officers to provide name and badge number if the stop doesn't result in an arrest or citation.

Each time we lock someone up, we also sentence their family members and children to traumatic separation and financial hardship. Over 68,000 children in Oregon have had an incarcerated parent in their lifetime and 80% of women who are incarcerated are mothers.

We must look for ways to better protect women, families, and BIPOC communities far before any involvement with the criminal justice system. The policies developed by the Criminal Justice Reform and Police Accountability Committee will make all of us safer by centering those who are most disproportionately harmed by our criminal justice system. Together, we can make Oregon a place where we all have a fair shot and feel safe. We urge your YES vote on HB 2169.

Sincerely,

Lisa Kwon, Policy Manager  
Family Forward Oregon