

Oregon Coalition of Christian Voices

Testimony on HB 2169 to House Committee on Judiciary

Chair Bynum, Vice Chairs Noble and Power, members of the committee;

My name is Karen Nettler. I am a board member of Oregon Coalition of Christian Voices. We assess policies from our faith perspective, and advocate for those policies that promote the dignity and worth of all citizens, and particularly those who are marginalized, those whose voices are often not heard.

I am writing in support of HB2169, a bill that well fits the criteria for our advocacy, as it addresses what has been called America's original sin, that of racism. Our faith traditions call us to speak out against any system that creates an assault on those who carry the image of God in their very being.

The rights of people of color are denied by systemic racism in countless ways, and none more egregiously than in the abuse of power in a broken criminal justice system. It is not necessary for me to establish the veracity of that statement, as numerous studies have shown it to be true, including a report, completed in November of 2019, that came out of this legislature in the passing of HB2355 in 2017. That bill mandated a report by 2021 that would examine traffic and pedestrian stops by all law enforcement agencies in Oregon to determine any racial and ethnic disparities. It is no surprise that the bill found such disparities exist.

It is now 2021, and recent events would suggest that those disparities still exist. We welcome the renewed focus on the study that HB2169 would bring to the issue of racial inequality in the criminal justice system. We believe the urgency of this moment must not be lost, that we must continue to identify and root out the racism that permeates our laws and practices that disproportionately affect people of color. We see HB 2169 as carrying out what scripture calls us to do as a society; to do justice and to love mercy.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Nettler, OCCV board chair