



PARTNERSHIP FOR SAFETY & JUSTICE

Submitted to the House Committee on Judiciary
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Testimony in Support of SJR 10
By Julianne Jackson, Partnership for Safety & Justice

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

At Partnership for Safety & Justice, we advocate for public safety and criminal justice policies that ensure accountability, equity, and healing for people convicted of crime, crime survivors, and the families and communities of both. For over 20 years, our work has promoted public safety with policies that keep families together, reduce racial disparities, and invest in communities across Oregon.

We believe that our communities' safety depends on dismantling anti-Black laws and systems. That is why Partnership for Safety & Justice endorses SJR 10, which would remove the slavery exception clause from the Oregon state constitution.

The racial inequities we see in our criminal justice system today are carried over from Oregon's long history of white supremacy, including being the only state in the country that was founded as a white-only state, slavery, Jim Crow, and the redlining and segregation of Black neighborhoods.

Today, this legacy continues in the form of racial profiling, police brutality, mandatory sentencing, and the criminalization of drugs — leading to disproportionate and permanent harm for Black and brown communities. The idea that we can truly begin to become anti-racist without first removing white supremacy from the very foundation of our state legislation is an impossibility.

The antiquated language of slavery in the Oregon Constitution allows for the classification of incarcerated people as “slaves,” which perpetuates the state's historic racism and denies our incarcerated loved ones dignity and humanity. This language also serves as a reminder to communities of color that their freedom remains arguable.

Oregon is a leader in public safety and criminal justice reform. We cannot abandon that legacy now. SJR 10 is too important to restoration, healing, and progress. Across the nation, four states have already removed this language, and eleven others are in the process of removing their slavery exception clauses. We believe it is imperative that Oregon take this proactive step to amplify the message that Oregon is committed to being actively anti-racist — a place where everyone has the rights, resources, and recognition needed to thrive.

Partnership for Safety & Justice urges this Committee to vote Yes on SJR 10 to ensure that our constitution reflects Oregonians' values of equity and safety in all our communities.