

Chair Bynum, Vice Chairs Noble and Power, and Members of the committee:

I am writing today to ask for your support of SJR 10. This proposed amendment would remove the antiquated language of slavery from the Oregon Constitution. Currently, Article 1, Section 34 of our State Constitution reads, "There shall be neither slavery, nor involuntary servitude in the State, otherwise than as punishment for a crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted."

This exception clause allows for the constitutional classification of incarcerated individuals as slaves, denying our incarcerated communities dignity and humanity, while perpetrating abuse and violence against them. This practice also contributes to the continuation of the institution of slavery in this current moment, and all of the racism that is deeply rooted within that.

SJR 10, as introduced, would remove this exception clause from the Oregon Constitution and finally do away with constitutionally permitted slavery in our State. This change in language is an essential step towards actively promoting anti-racism in our State.

I believe it is imperative that Oregon take this step to demand a more just and equitable future, wherein everyone has the rights, resources, and recognition needed to thrive. I urge this Committee to vote yes on SJR 10, as introduced, to ensure that slavery is truly a thing of the past.

In Solidarity,
Jessie