

May 13th, 2021
House Committee on Judiciary
Re: Support for SJR 10

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 a punishment for 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 perpetuating historic racism.

Where, at the state level, is the respect for the current Oregonians who identify as Black, Indigenous, Latinx? If SJR 10 does not pass, do you know what that would say to them? That they don't matter. It's time for all communities of Color to hear Oregon say "Yes. We respect your life". This can only happen by removing the incredibly insulting language, currently found within our own state constitution.

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 amplifying the message that Oregon is committed to being actively anti-racist.

Oregon's racist history does not need to be our future. Removing the exception clause is not only an essential step, it also creates pathways for more reformative opportunities.

We believe it is imperative that Oregon take this proactive 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,

Angela Green