

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

I entreat you to support 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.

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(hold)

This exception clause allows for the constitutional classification of incarcerated individuals as slaves, denying our incarcerated communities dignity and humanity, while perpetuating historic racism. In light of Oregon's foundational white supremacist land theft and Black exclusion laws, as well the persistent racial inequalities we suffer from now, we must make this move toward correction and truth.

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.

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,
Harold McNaron