

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. I can't imagine any of us feel comfortable with being responsible for slavery in 2021!

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.

I have personally volunteered with incarcerated individuals in our state and know how hard-working and helpful they can be. They deserve fair compensation since they do meaningful work for our communities - such as the essential work of wildfire fighting each summer. I also know them to be warm, funny, smart and relatable individuals who don't deserve to be treated like slaves, especially since degrading treatment is unlikely to help incarcerated people build up their positive sense of self and prepare to reenter society.

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,  
Sarah Allan