

Chair Smith Warner, Vice Chairs Drazan and Holvey, and members of the Committee:

My name is Jordan Schott and I am a Willamette alum. I am also a co-founder and the Director of Legislative Strategy for Oregonians Against Slavery and Involuntary Servitude, or OASIS. We are a grassroots organization fighting to end modern-day slavery in Oregon. OASIS is doing this by working to change the language of the Oregon Constitution to formally ban slavery and involuntary servitude of incarcerated persons, first and foremost through SJR 10. Through non-partisan coalition building and the centering of incarcerated voices, OASIS believes in creating a future that is more just for all Oregonians.

In the 2019 Session, myself and a few other Willamette students stumbled upon the exception clause in Article 1 Section 34 of the Oregon Constitution and were determined to change it. With the devoted support of the late Senator Jackie Winters, we brought this same proposed amendment forward during the 2019 session. Unfortunately, that bill died in committee, but this only reinvigorated our drive for change. In the spring of 2020, I took a class at Willamette University which brought students inside of Oregon State Penitentiary to attend class with a number of incarcerated individuals. It was in this class that I rededicated myself to ensuring that my classmates would never again be constitutionally considered slaves.

Over this past summer, amidst a global pandemic and a renewed fight for racial justice, myself and a number of other Willamette alum and incarcerated individuals came together to found OASIS. It is with this background that we proudly present SJR 10, a bill that we care deeply about. SJR 10, in conjunction with SJM 2, would amplify the message that Oregon is committed to being actively anti-racist. We believe it is imperative that Oregon take proactive steps to ensure that slavery is truly a thing of the past.

SJR 10 is an incredibly simple bill – fundamentally, all it does is remove the exception clause from Article 1 Section 34 of the Oregon Constitution. However, this proposed amendment has the potential to take a monumental step towards restoring the dignity and humanity that our incarcerated communities deserve. By changing this language, Oregon would do away with the antiquated racist legacy of slavery within our State's most important document.

We are joined by a growing coalition of organizations across Oregon and the country in support of this movement, including the ACLU of Oregon, Urban League of Portland, Partnership for Safety and Justice, Next Up Action Fund, Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon, Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon, Oregon Justice Resource Center, and Abolish Slavery National Network. We are also joined by a growing number of states across the nation who are taking similar steps to remove their own slavery exception clauses. We do not want Oregon to be left behind.

Finally, I want to thank the sponsors of this bill: Senators Manning and Frederick, and Representative Bynum, who sponsored this bill in the 2019 session and reintroduced this session, as well as Senators Wagner, Dembrow, Gelser, Riley, and Steiner Hayward, and Representatives Fahey, Dexter, Sollman, Campos, Valderrama, Nosse, Reynolds, Wilde, Pham, Grayber, Williams, McLain, and Meek who have signed on to show their support this session.

With that, I respectfully ask that the Committee review the submitted written testimony and I urge this Committee to schedule a work session for SJR 10 as quickly as possible and to vote aye on this important legislation in order to bring Oregon one step closer to a more just and equitable world.

- Jordan Schott