



February 11, 2021

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and members of the committee,

**For the record, my name is Michelle Hicks and I am here representing the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO).**

My organization serves the Asian Pacific Islander community throughout Oregon to build power, develop leaders, and advance equity through organizing, advocacy, cultural work, and community development. **I am writing to urge support for SJR 10, which will remove the slavery exception from the Oregon State Constitution.**

The Oregon State Constitution codified the express lack of rights of Black people and other people of color due to their racial identity. While Oregon was one of the states to not permit overt slavery within its borders, it permitted a more covert form slavery as a consequence of incarceration thus, allowing slave labor to support the economic development of Oregon and the practice of slavery to exist within its borders. The express hatred and discrimination against Black, Indigenous and other people of color that was codified in this constitution created systems of subjugation and discrimination that still continue today.

The overt discrimination continues to manifests in the over-incarceration of Black, Indigenous and other people of color. To provide a little perspective, Oregon's prison population consists of 10% Black Oregonians, 16% Latine/x Oregonians, 3% Native and Indigenous Oregonians, and 69% white Oregonians, despite the population of Oregon consisting of only 2% Black Oregonians, 1% Native and Indigenous Oregonians, only 12% Latine/x Oregonians, and nearly 78% white Oregonians.<sup>1</sup> The slavery exception, among others, allows Black, Indigenous and other people of color, when incarcerated, to be legally classified as slaves and paid pennies on the dollar for their labor, continuing the practice of slavery to this day.

Constitutionally classifying people as slaves in prison, continues to deny the API, Black, Indigenous and other communities of color their dignity and humanity while allowing the state to continue to profit off their labor.

We have the opportunity to take a bold step closer to becoming an Oregon we can all call home. Our communities will never be truly free until the slavery exception among others is removed. **On behalf of the Asian Pacific Islander community in Oregon, I am here to ask you to vote and pass SJR 10, removing the slavery exception from the Oregon State Constitution. Thank you.**

Sincerely,

Michelle Hicks, Field Manager, APANO

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<sup>1</sup> Oregon Profile: <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/OR.html>