



February 23, 2021

To: Senate Committee On Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation

From: Zach Winston, Policy Director

Re: **In Support of SJR 10**

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee,

The goal of the Oregon Justice Resource Center (OJRC) is to promote civil rights and improve legal representation for communities that have often been underserved in the past: people living in poverty and people of color among them. We work in collaboration with like-minded organizations to maximize our reach to serve underrepresented populations, to train future public interest lawyers, and to educate our community on issues related to civil rights and civil liberties.

The OJRC encourages your **support of SJR 10**, removing the slavery exception from the Oregon State Constitution.

In striving for a more just and equitable future, wherein everyone has the rights, resources, and recognition needed to thrive, Oregonians must examine the systems, laws, and language from Oregon's past that continue to disproportionately impact BIPOC communities today. An example of language from Oregon's past can be found in Article 1, Section 34 of the Oregon State Constitution: "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,**" permitting slavery to continue behind bars.¹

While the slavery exception was drafted over 160 years ago, the impact is still disproportionately felt today by the BIPOC communities. For example, Oregon's current 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, only 1% Native and Indigenous Oregonians, only 12% Latine/x Oregonians, and nearly 78% white Oregonians.²

The slavery exception continues to deny the BIPOC communities their dignity and humanity while allowing the state to profit off their labor. **The OJRC urges the Committee to pass SJR 10, removing the slavery exception from the Oregon State Constitution.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Zach Winston' in a cursive script.

Zach Winston
Policy Director

¹ Section 34 of the US constitution

² Oregon Profile: <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/OR.html>