

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

Please accept this testimony in support of SB 571, a bill to restore the right to vote to those that are currently incarcerated in Oregon's prisons. Our state has a history of racial discrimination; it was created as a white's only state and intentionally tried to exclude people of color, quite successfully. We also created a non-unanimous jury verdict system to try to dilute the influence of minority groups from jury verdicts. We disproportionately incarcerate our state's BIPOC community, which means, while they are incarcerated, we are disproportionately disenfranchising our BIPOC community. We can undo this wrong. Our state has long been a leader in working to ensure that voting is easy, accessible, and now, with postage paid, free. It would be easy to provide voter registration forms to those that are incarcerated, roughly 13,000 people. Similarly, voters' guides, ballots, and ballot collection boxes can be supplied to prisons without much cost to the state. It's time to begin to unwind the wrongs of our racist system of incarceration. This is one step in the right direction.

Thank you,

Amie Wexler

Oregon Justice Resource Center, Associate Director