

February 24, 2021  
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Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Senate Committee on  
Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation,

Good morning Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and members of the committee. My name is Paxton Rothwell and I am an organizer with Sunrise PDX. I fully support SB 571, SJM2, and SJR10.

I am a white male and, for the course of my life, have not known anyone who has been imprisoned. My understanding of the prison system stems from television and driving by the prisons across the state, always curious what is going on indoors.

Since joining Sunrise I've begun learning more about the prison system in the United States. I've learned how the US has 25% of the world's incarcerated population without having anywhere near that percentage of people, and have learned that prisons use their ability to manufacture goods with cheap or free prison labor as essentially a 21st century slavery system.

This is unacceptable. The "land of the free" and the "pillar of democracy" is doing an incredible disservice to members of our communities that have committed a crime. I fully support the abolition of the prison system as it currently operates and have it replaced with a system similar to Norway's rehabilitation program. We must no longer act in ways that "lock people up and throw away the key". It is time for a compassionate outlook on crime and people who commit crime - everyone has a path that led them to make a single bad decision. Oftentimes desperation and poverty play major roles in pushing people to the point where they believe crime is the only salvation. So, while the system that perpetuates the cycles of poverty remains supreme (I am referencing Capitalism), we need to reform our prisons to be humane places of compassionate rehabilitation.

SB 571 will allow imprisoned people to vote. This makes sense to me completely. Though they are in prison, they have not lost their citizenship or residency of a state. They deserve to vote for their representatives as much as anyone else does.

Further, I support the calls to action in SJM2 and SJR10 that call for the 13th amendment of the US Constitution to be rewritten to not include any exceptions to slavery. The police system that we still are suffering with today stems from police groups sent out to capture runaway slaves. How cruel is it that almost 200 years later there is still a form of legal slavery in the United States that disproportionately affects Black and Brown members of our community. We all

deserve equal protection under the law, and while subtle and elusive ways to *still* implement a slavery-esque system just means that we do not, in reality, have equality.

I am a firm believer that many of the issues the United States faces today stem from the fact that we as a nation have never truly owned up to the *centuries* of crimes against humanity that were directed at Indigenous, Black, and Brown members of our community. We will continue to be haunted by these atrocities until we face them. The United States has a problem with exploiting humans and this problem persists to this very day. A curse lies on this country until we face our wrongs: even Germany faced its atrocities in the wake of the Holocaust and vowed never to go down the same path again.

Thank you for your time,

Paxton Rothwell