



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Testimony in Support of HB 2002

February 24, 2021

Chair Bynum, Vice Chairs Noble and Power, and members of the committee,

**My name is Khanh Pham, State Representative for HD 46. As a co-chief sponsor I am honored to testify in support of HB 2002 Justice Reinvestment Act alongside my representatives in the BIPOC Caucus.**

In 1994, Oregon passed mandatory minimum laws, and over the past twenty five years, we've seen the resulting explosion of the prison population and the disproportionate impact this has had on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities.

In the wake of the growing movement to challenge the racism within our criminal justice system, HB 2002 modernizes Oregon's mandatory minimums of certain felonies and allows courts to examine each individual as a human in their unique circumstances, rather than a case number, while still following the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission sentencing guidelines.

Our legislature has this tremendous opportunity to show Oregonians that we see the need to meet this political moment to restore some faith in our criminal justice system that often seems devoid of true justice. I believe we legislators are up to this task. **Trust is at the heart of this bill**, trust between the community and the justice system that seeks to serve them, trust that our government is willing to reverse decades of wrongful narratives and actions, trust that our legislators will invest in systems that see prisoners as *people*, not just problems to lock away.

About 15 years ago, I had the privilege of being part of a volunteer group in Oakland called the Asian Prisoner Support Committee. We would visit prisons, and were matched with pen pals in prison. This experience of building real relationships with people in prison helped shape a core conviction that I hold today -- that our society, our government, **should aim to see and sentence people** as more than the sum of one action, one mistake, or one regrettable moment. Reforming mandatory minimum sentences gives back more opportunity to evaluate individuals as whole complex humans. Investing in a system that aims to guide people away from incarceration in the first place is a wonderful use of resources.

By investing in the Reimagine Safety Fund, Oregon is directly supporting a community-led effort to build a better system and meet the needs of all Oregonians, especially those who are the most vulnerable in our justice system. Reimagining Safety works to educate and engage all Oregonians in our criminal justice system, because this system affects us all -- it is a reflection of our shared humanity. 95% of folks incarcerated will eventually return back to society. 100% of incarcerated people have friends and families who care about them and their future. This bill is

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just as much about our state's future as it is the crimes of the past. I urge this committee to support HB 2002. Thank you.