

Good Afternoon Chair Bynum and Members of the Committee,

My name is Shani Harris-Bagwell and I am the Political Director at Imagine Black, formerly known as PAALF Action Fund. Imagine Black helps Portland's Black community imagine the alternatives we deserve, builds our political participation, and supports leadership to achieve those alternatives. We envision a world where people of African descent enjoy the rights, resources, and recognition to be a thriving, resilient, and connected community.

I'm going to take you on a trip that shouldn't be very exciting: pretend I'm a young Black woman coming home from work, or on my way to school, when I see the lights behind me. I panic and start questioning myself. I wasn't speeding. I've broken no laws. My car is in good shape, my registration is up to date. I am now being told by an officer that my taillight is out and they are asking for my license and registration. I reach to grab it from the glove box and am suddenly being told at gunpoint to exit the vehicle and am being violently arrested for resisting arrest. I think: what have I done to deserve this? What am I being arrested for? Why is this happening to me? The confusion and terror are overwhelming and all too common when traffic stops are the primary reason for contact with a police officer.

Or I could be a young Black woman who has just been released from prison and am under supervision. I am making money the only ways I know how to and am working when I am jumped, robbed, and assaulted. I am hurt. I am physically hurt and I'm scared. Who can I call for help? Do I report it? Or should I ask: why don't I call the police? Because I'm under supervision and any contact with police will lead to my arrest. So I suffer in fear and silence.

What we are aiming to do with this bill is limit the contact people have with police and limit the reasons police can physically connect with civilians. This bill would mean that police can't stop you for a broken headlight, taillight, brake light or expired registration. It would mean that police would have to send you a ticket and that police would no longer have those excuses to stop women like Sandra Bland or men like Philando Castille.

This bill also means that Prostitution, Criminal Trespass, Resisting arrest, and interfering with a police officer will no longer be arrestable offenses. This will be a huge step forward in tackling racial profiling and racial disparities in arrests.

If we look at the current justice system like a giant skyscraper sized jenga tower made of heavy steel beams, it's hard to topple. Structural racism holds it firmly in place. HB 2002 is our opportunity to take out some of those pieces. And that paves the way for us to take another piece, and then another until we can weaken the foundation and reuse those pieces to build a structure, a community that supports us all.

At Imagine Black, we view things through The Black Queer Feminist lens, which is a political theory and practice developed out of Black feminist and LGBTQIA+ liberation movements.

This praxis is a lens through which we better understand the conditions of all Black people -- highlighting what we must transform in order to liberate all oppressed people. The Black Queer Feminist Lens offers a holistic understanding of our conditions and connectedness as Black people. As a result, we understand that liberation for all Black people can only be realized by lifting up the voices, experiences and prioritizing the issues of historically silenced and vulnerable groups within Black communities -- specifically, queer, trans and GNC, femme, poor, disabled, working, and undocumented people. We take Fannie Lou Hamer's words seriously: "Nobody's free until everybody's free." HB 2002 is a first step towards that goal.

Thank you for your time.