



PARTNERSHIP FOR SAFETY & JUSTICE

**Submitted to the House Committee on Judiciary
February 25, 2021**

Testimony in Support of HB 2002

By Shannon Wight, Deputy Director, Partnership for Safety & Justice

Chair Bynum, Vice-Chairs Noble and Power, and Members of the Committee,

At Partnership for Safety & Justice, we advocate for public safety and criminal justice policies that ensure accountability, equity, and healing for people convicted of crime, crime survivors, and the families and communities of both. For over 20 years, our work has promoted public safety with policies that keep families together, reduce racial disparities, and invest in communities across Oregon.

After the murder of George Floyd and increased calls for meaningful criminal justice reform, we at Partnership for Safety and Justice acknowledged that had to do our work differently.

Since 2013 and even before, we worked closely with law enforcement, DOC, community corrections and other system stakeholders to pass and support Justice Reinvestment. We have been the lead organizer on an event that brought together sheriffs, county commissioners, community corrections and other stakeholders called United for Justice to advocate for continued funding of Justice Reinvestment.

We support Justice Reinvestment because it shrinks the correction systems through sentencing reforms and reinvests in counties. PSJ testified in support of full funding for the Justice Reinvestment budget this year.

But we, and I think all of us, have to acknowledge that these efforts have done little to impact the Black and brown people and communities who are most impacted by over policing and disproportionate sentencing.

So this year we did our work in a way that prioritized racial equity that's overdue. Working with Latino Network, we convened a workgroup group of both people who are usually at the criminal justice reform table like ACLU, the Oregon Criminal Defense Lawyers and Disability Right Oregon. But this time we centered the experience of people and organizations of color and people impacted by over-policing and disparate sentencing including Red Lodge Transitions, Flip the Script (a program at Central City Concern), Imagine Black and the Coalition of Communities of Color.

For the past 6 months, we've met for 90 minutes every week to develop HB 2002. HB 2002 is continuing to meet Justice Reinvestment's goals of shrinking our corrections systems and investing in communities, but leading with racial equity. To achieve this, we're targeting charges

that drive racial disparities and investing 20% of Justice Reinvestment funds into culturally specific and culturally responsive services.

HB 2002 is a critical next step for JRI. All of us should have done this long ago to directly address racial disparities in our system. We now have the opportunity to do better.

We are getting feedback and know there will be amendments, some to clarify unintended consequences and others after realizing that some portions need more work and time than we have this session.

Thank you, Rep Noble, for your feedback on how to clarify what we mean by arrest, and that you, Rep Krupf, for your thoughtful questions. We know we need to clarify that by probation revocation, we mean that a person can't be revoked for a non new crime to their full prison term – our intent is not to prevent the imposition of sanctions.

As a coalition, we especially want to thank survivor advocates for feedback on HB 2002.

There are two areas where, after feedback from stakeholders our coalition will be requesting be removed from the bill:

First, after valuable input from survivor advocates members, the coalition has voted to remove Sex Abuse I from the sentence reductions in this bill. We recognize that Sex Abuse I present dynamics that look different than that of Robbery II and Assault II and will require further consideration. While we don't believe long prison sentences adequately address this harm, for now we want to remove this sentence reduction, and we will continue to work with advocates to identify a better path forward for all who are impacted by Sex Abuse in ways that address accountability and healing.

Second, we will remove changes to Section 21 regarding arrests of less than a Class A person misdemeanor. This section has too many unintended consequences including not considering violations of restraining orders.

We have also been in conversation with the Criminal Justice Commission and Community Correction and are in the process of working through their concerns as a coalition as well.

I suspect today you will hear stories of how well the system has worked today – I think we know that may be true for some, but for others that is decidedly false. Our system is built within Oregon's distinctly racist history, and we must be specific in our reforms to address that. That is why we have HB 2002.

Thank you Representative Bynum for giving today's entire committee hearing to HB 2002 and for your sponsorship. Members of the committee – thank you for your consideration.