



BRIDGES *to change*

To: Members of the House Judiciary Committee
From: Bridges to Change
Date: March 9, 2021
Re: Support for HB 2366

Members of the Committee,
On behalf of Bridges to Change, I write to you in support of House Bill 2366.

Bridges to Change is a non-profit organization that provides substance use and mental health treatment, transitional and permanent housing, and mentoring services for individuals in Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties.

Representation matters and in the United States representation is determined by those who vote. As a right of citizenship voting should not be connected to punishment for criminal offenses. Disenfranchising a specific group of people undermines democracy, with a disproportionate impact on people of color due to the racial disparities in our unjust carceral system.

Oregon leads the country in access to voting for people with conviction histories, we do not restrict the right to vote for individuals who have completed their sentence or are on parole or probation. 34 other states have far more restrictive policies disenfranchising people with conviction histories. Right now, we have the opportunity to be a leader, again, in expanding voting access and creating the opportunity for all citizens to have representation and a say in the workings of our state.

However, despite being a leader in access to voting overall and for people post-prison or jail, the Sentencing Project estimates that approximately 15,000 Oregonians remain ineligible to vote. Because we restrict the right to vote for people in our correctional facilities. This is a significant number of people to be unable to have a say in our representative Democracy.

Treating people who are serving their sentences in our correctional facilities as full citizens is a moral imperative and is legislation that ought to pass this session. We urge your full support of this effort to pass HB 2366.

Sincerely,

Monta Knudson
Executive Director, Bridges to Change