



Standing for dignity in the workplace

February 1, 2022

Testimony in Support of SB 1510

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee:

I write in strong support of SB 1510. This bill will reform our broken and racist criminal justice system by adopting the recommendations of the Transforming Justice Coalition that form the basis of SB 1510. NWJJP is a member of the Fair Shot Coalition and we support this bill as part of our ongoing work towards achieving racial justice in Oregon.

The Northwest Workers' Justice Project provides legal representation to low-wage workers throughout the economy in sectors such as construction, building maintenance, landscaping, hotels and restaurants, food processing, agriculture and forestry. All of our clients are low-wage earners. The large majority of our clients are people of color, and most are immigrants.

Many of our immigrant clients have dealt with racism and fear of deportation for as long as they have lived in this country. Some have been deported for non-violent offenses without any opportunity for diversion. We have seen the traumatic effects of deportation too many times. We strongly support the component of this bill that makes having a broken headlight, taillight, brake light, or license plate light a “secondary offense,” where an officer can only issue a citation if a driver is pulled over for something else. Unnecessary interactions between law enforcement and Black and brown Oregonians increase risks of excessive force and violence in our communities.

Many of our non-immigrant clients have also felt unsafe in their own communities, homes, places of worship, at school, or in public spaces due to our state’s history of white supremacy, white supremacist violence, exclusion laws, curfews and systemic racism. We need to take bold steps as a state to reform our criminal justice system, where too many BIPOC people end up due to this history of white supremacy. Restorative justice is a model that seeks to repair the harm caused by crime instead of punishing offenders. We should lead the nation in encouraging greater use of this practice with funding provided to the Justice Reinvestment Equity Program, which will fund services that promote racial equity, address racial disparities prevalent in Oregon’s criminal justice system, and reduce prison use.

Black people represent 2.2 percent of Oregon’s population but 9.3 percent of the state’s prison population. This is because of structural racism. Black Americans are also five times more likely to be pulled over in a vehicle, even though white Americans are three times more likely to

have contraband than people of color. Profiling leads to disproportionate arrests and conviction rate among communities of color.

We are also encouraged to see a community-based, culturally-competent approach to healing, treatment and safety in the Justice Reinvestment Equity Program. Our clients trust groups that are led by and look like people like them. There is no replacement for seeing yourself mirrored in the groups and people that are helping you.

The policies in SB 1510 will make all of us safer by centering those who are most disproportionately harmed by our criminal justice system. We urge your YES vote on SB 1510. Thank you.

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