

**Cash Spencer**

mscash74@gmail.com

**Testimony of Cash Spencer in support of Oregon Senate Bill 1511.**

I come before you as a native Oregonian, a homeowner, a registered voter, and a taxpayer. And I am a black woman. I am here today to convey my understanding of the enormous responsibility of jury service and the magnitude that decisions of jurists have on people's lives. I served with extreme professionalism, anticipating that at the conclusion of deliberations, decision-making would be based solely on the evidence presented. However, I was disheartened to learn that a long-held law, rooted in racism, made non-unanimous jury decisions permissible. One of my fellow jurors did want to be inconvenienced by continued deliberations and, therefore, chose to align with the majority. I voted based on the evidence, but it didn't matter. The individual was convicted 10-2. As such, I feel an obligation to raise my voice in defense of justice and in opposition to racism – the same voice of mine that was silenced years ago when I voted “not guilty,” only to watch the person on trial be convicted.

It has been difficult to have pride in my state and faith in the legal system since this experience, especially learning about the genesis of the law and the singular goal of silencing the voices of minorities. But today, you all have an opportunity to restore some of that pride and faith by voting to pass SB 1511. The Supreme Court recognized that non-unanimous juries were racist, unconstitutional, and worked just as intended – “dilut[ing] the influence of racial, ethnic, and religious minorities” – Oregonian's like me – on our state's juries. In response to this definitive ruling, Oregon did away with this unfair and arcane law. Though I was pleased by its elimination, it did not restore my belief in our state's institutions and values. Oregon did not act on its own, but rather in response to *Ramos* – a consequential but overdue decision.

Our state now has a chance not to just react, but to **act**. Legislators: I hope that you will use your power to do so. There are so many Oregonians who have been irreversibly impacted by non-unanimous juries – both those who were convicted by them, and those like me, who were silenced. It's not too late to right this wrong. Thank you.