

**FARRAH CHAICHI**  
**STATE REPRESENTATIVE**  
DISTRICT 35



## **OREGON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Thank you Chair Prozanski and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee for receiving my testimony today. For the record, my name is Farrah Chaichi, I am the representative for House District 35 and I am writing you today in support of SB 579 which guarantees the right to vote for adults in custody. I apologize that my schedule would not allow for in person testimony.

We are told in the United States that the founding of our country was based on an objection to “taxation without representation.” Currently 4.6 million US citizens are disenfranchised from voting in elections based on their interactions with the criminal justice system. That is roughly 2% of our voting population, nearly the size of the entire state of Louisiana. 12,000 Oregonians are included in that number. 12,000 people who are subject to laws made by representatives that they have no say in electing. 12,000 people who are separated from their community and denied basic human rights to self determination and participation in elections.

We must also acknowledge the racist impacts of both mass incarceration and voter disenfranchisement. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) are disproportionately stopped, arrested, charged, and imprisoned, which also means disproportionate numbers of people are denied the right to vote. Oregon has made strides to separate itself from the misdeeds of the past. Measure 112 was one such important step. But laws made with the intention of suppressing the voice of BIPOC Oregonians are still achieving their intended result. Stripping adults in custody of the right to vote entered the Oregon constitution during the Jim Crow Era and today disproportionately impacts Black Oregonians. Two percent of Oregonians are Black and yet nine percent of incarcerated Oregonians are Black. This Jim Crow era law is having its intended effect, to disenfranchise Black Oregonians from voting.

We want Oregonians to live a healthy and full life after incarceration. Voting connects Oregonians with their communities, cities, and state. Taking that away robs them of a key point of connection to ease their transition to freedom. It also takes away a connection to advocate for loved ones. 75% of women in Oregon prisons are mothers. That’s 1,000 mothers in our state who do not have a say in the community their children are being raised in.

We, as a legislature, can act because we are elected by the popular will of the people. But the value of our mandate is tarnished when all voices are not heard. In our new century, Oregon has prided itself on being a beacon of civil rights in freedom. That is why I believe we should join the District of Columbia and states who have guaranteed the right to vote to all citizens. I urge a yes vote on SB 579.

Respectfully,

Representative Farrah Chaichi  
House District 35  
Beaverton & Aloha