

Submitter: Babak Zolfaghari-Azar

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General
Government, and Veterans

Measure: HB2650

Chair Grayber, Vice-Chair Tran, Vice-Chair Lewis, and members of the committee,

My name is Babak Zolfaghari-Azar, and I am the Senior Policy Manager at Partnership for Safety and Justice. I am testifying in support of House Bill 2650. Equitable workgroups and task forces are essential to effective public policy. Centering the voices of people directly impacted by a policy or changes to law creates better investment of community members in their communities and better outcomes for implementation. Valuing and including diverse experiences in workgroups and task forces positively influences Oregonians and is an acknowledgement that historically workgroups and task forces have not been equitable.

House Bill 2650 not only legislates equity in workgroups in terms of diversity in participant background and life experience, but it also includes compensation for time.

Community members would be taking time off work and time away from supporting their families to share their experiences and help shape public policy. The strategic, well thought-out payment system outlined in this bill is critical to this work.

Lastly, sharing the decision-making table with folks who are the experts in their own communities and who are directly impacted by policy change will result in more effective outcomes when we reach the all-important implementation stage. The impact of the work before implementation has historically been underestimated and undervalued. Having equitable workgroups will address an underlying issue behind effective implementation, blind spots and collateral consequences of policy change that are not captured when these spaces don't share power and discretion with directly impacted community members. This can then lead to further legislation being needed in future sessions, which could have been

prevented
had the workgroup been more equitable.

Thank you for considering HB2650. Equitable workgroups and task forces are a
winning
solution for all Oregonians.