

OPEN LETTER TO GOVERNOR KATE BROWN-

Thank you, Governor Kate Brown, for fighting for community safety and correcting injustice.

Dear Governor Brown,

We are advocates who are working to advance community safety policies across Oregon that promote accountability for harm, racial justice, healing for crime survivors' trauma, and second chances. Among us are crime victims, people with lived experience in the criminal-legal system, people who experience racism in the public safety system, and community members who believe that Oregonians deserve a response to violence that is itself free of violence.

Thank you for fighting for true community safety in all our communities. By granting clemency to people who have taken responsibility for the harm they have caused and who have worked on their rehabilitation, you have been a leader in addressing systemic failures in our criminal legal system.

We know commutations and pardons can be hard on crime victims and survivors. Healing takes time, and no one should go through the clemency process alone. It is critical that people impacted by violence are supported at every stage of their journey, including making sure that victims are informed, rights are met, and emotional supports are offered. Thank you for recognizing these needs and for creating the new position in your office of Victim Impact Liaison.

We appreciate the work you have done to ensure that victim advocates are available so that survivors' rights and supports are delivered.

For too long, our response to harm and violence has largely defaulted to a single solution: severe prison sentences. But severe prison sentences are the most expensive and least effective approach to achieving community safety, accountability, and healing. In fact, severe prison sentences disproportionately shatter communities of color and low-income communities, limit opportunities for rehabilitation, and siphon resources that should be directed to crime survivors' healing.

Our best path towards stronger and safer communities is investing in proven solutions that prevent crime, invest in trauma recovery, reduce racial disparities, promote restoration, and offer second chances.

- **Crime prevention.** Our criminal justice system should focus on reducing harm and violence rather than exacerbating them. This means investing in communities' resources that respond to trauma recovery, addiction, mental illness, and poverty
- **Invest in trauma recovery.** Crime victims and survivors have limited resources to help rebuild their lives after trauma. Instead of directing taxpayer dollars into prisons, we should invest in healing, ensuring that crime survivors of color have equitable access to services.
- **Reduce racial disparities.** People and communities of color are disproportionately represented at every point in the public safety, criminal, and legal systems. To undo this systemic racism and the resulting generational trauma, we need to use all the tools we have, including clemency.
- **Promote restoration.** We can invest in restorative justice programs that center the experiences of those harmed; encourage those who have caused harm to take responsibility, repair the harm, and identify solutions that promote healing; and support crime victims and survivors who have been harmed, as well as community members who are impacted by that harm.
- **Offer second chances.** People who have been accountable and taken responsibility for the harm they've caused should be given a second chance to be contributing members of our communities; these earned opportunities should be without barriers such as fees and other collateral consequences that keep people in poverty and prevent them from thriving.

These are values that Oregonians deserve in our public safety and criminal legal systems, and you have expanded opportunities for each through the thoughtful and thorough clemency review process that you directed.

Our public safety and criminal legal systems need to be just and equitable with approaches that help all Oregon communities be safe and thrive. Reducing imprisonment for those who accept responsibility, while at the same time supporting victims and survivors, is an important step to ending mass incarceration and decades of punitive policies that target communities of color and low-income communities.

Thank you for being a champion of these values.

Sincerely,

[Partnership for Safety & Justice](#)
[ACLU of Oregon](#)
[Urban League of Portland](#)
[Coalition of Communities of Color](#)
[Sponsors](#)
[Bridges to Change](#)
[Asian Pacific American Network of](#)
[Oregon \(APANO\)](#)
[Unite Oregon](#)

[Next Up Action Fund](#)
[Central City Concern](#)
[Oregon Criminal Defense Lawyers](#)
[Association](#)
[Criminal Justice Reform Clinic at Lewis](#)
[& Clark Law School](#)
[Basic Rights Oregon](#)
[Public Defenders of Oregon](#)