



STATEMENT FROM OREGON JUSTICE RESOURCE CENTER ON THE FAIR PUNISHMENT PROJECT'S REPORT: "OREGON'S DEATH PENALTY DISPROPORTIONATELY USED AGAINST PERSONS WITH SIGNIFICANT MENTAL IMPAIRMENTS"

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

"The report calls into question whether Oregon has met the constitutional standard of limiting the death penalty to the most serious crimes and the most culpable perpetrators. The Fair Punishment Project's research shows two thirds of people on Oregon's death row show signs of serious mental illness or intellectual impairment, suffered severe childhood trauma or were under 21 at the time of their offense.

The people on Oregon's death row are not all "the worst of the worst", objectively assessed as being more culpable than any other person who has committed homicide in our state. According to a recent academic study, since Oregon restored the death penalty in 1984, 22 out of the 62 people sentenced to death – more than one in three - had their convictions or death sentences reversed. This speaks to the tendency of our death penalty system to get it wrong, wasting time and money in our justice system over many years.

Oregon needs to carefully reexamine its death penalty in light of the evidence amassing about its flaws. It is past time for Oregonians to have an honest conversation about it, but until we do, Governor Kate Brown alone has the power to end decades of stalemate. She should use her constitutional powers to commute the sentences of those on death row to life without parole. This would address the serious concerns over our death penalty and free up tax dollars to invest in education, public safety and infrastructure."

*Statement to be attributed to Alice Lundell, Director of Communication, Oregon Justice Resource Center.*

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