

Testimony by John D. Carter

Support for HB 3194 Public Safety Package

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Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee:

My name is John Douglas Carter, and I am here today to testify in support of the Oregon Public Safety Package, HB 3194. I am here in my personal capacity, as a member of Oregon's Business Community and as current Chair of the Oregon Business Plan Steering Committee, which I am sure you recognize as an effort driven by the business leaders of the state and its major business associations to help grow Oregon's economy. I do **not** purport to represent the views of any of the Companies on whose boards I currently sit—Schnitzer Steel Industries, Inc.; Northwest Natural Gas Company, FLIR Systems, Inc., Kuni Automotive, Inc.; and JELD-WEN, Inc. I also have my own companies in business in Oregon, engaged in the wine business and the real estate business, but in the case of those businesses, I feel very comfortable noting that I represent their views.

My purpose today is to support the legislative changes contained in HB 3194. My reasons for supporting those changes are very straightforward:

- The states that will succeed economically are those that invest wisely in their public sector—businesses that invest in the wrong things, or inefficiently, can't compete as effectively. The same is true for states. When we spend on the wrong things, we divert resources from productive uses and increase the risk more taxes on our people. That has major negative impacts on our ability to attract business and grow our economy. The effort here is part of the Governor's overall and difficult effort to improve the delivery of healthcare, education, and employee retirement benefits, as well as corrections.
- The proposals have been developed by the Governor's Commission on Public Safety, and represent their analysis of what is needed to avoid the necessity of adding significantly to the capacity of the Oregon prison system in the next ten years. Building a new prison is not, in my view, the ideal objective for our public safety system. If the legislature passes HB 3194, the estimated savings over the next ten years could reach \$600 million. For this State, that is significant. It is the reason that public safety reform is a part of the Oregon Business Plan.
- If we achieve those savings, some of the money can be redirected into public safety resources—from my standpoint, most importantly into local law enforcement, and victims' services. The Governor's Commission has articulated a series of those strategies. Directing funds to the Oregon State Police, local sheriffs' departments, and community corrections departments would be much better prevention-oriented choices.

- Passing HB 3194 will assist us in the effort to prevent tax increases driven by what I feel are less than optimal policy choices.

There is another broad reason for supporting HB 3194. While there is no sentiment on my part to reduce the requirement that criminal behavior needs to be met with appropriate punishment, sending some types of non-violent offenders into the prison system amounts to providing them with a graduate degree in criminal behavior. Far better to deter them, and if need be punish them, at the local level. Allowing local authorities more flexibility in tailoring the punishment to fit the crime should be more effective in deterring criminal behavior in the future. But to be clear—there is no intent on my part to encourage turning our attention away from criminal behavior, or excusing it in any way. There are simply better ways to deal with some forms of crime than we are availing ourselves of, and we cannot afford—financially or from an effective policy standpoint—to treat all as violent, hardened criminals.

Nearly one year ago the Governor reconvened the Oregon Commission on Public Safety. HB 3194 reflects the work, policy discussions, and findings of that Commission and the work of this Joint Committee on Public Safety. When the process of government works, we need to recognize that fact. I recommend support for HB 3194 and I urge the Committee to move this package forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.