

**Testimony of Retired Gresham Police Chief Carla Piluso
in Support of HB 3194
Provided to the Joint Committee on Public Safety
Friday, April 5, 2013**

Co-Chairs, Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Carla Piluso, retired police chief of the Gresham Police Department where I worked for a total of thirty years. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am here to testify in support of HB 3194.

While I have been retired for four years, I have remained active in my community and continue to support and work for making our region safe and healthy. I currently serve as a Director on the Gresham-Barlow School Board, am the Chair of Multnomah County's Commission on Children, Families and Community and am the President of the Board of Human Solutions, whose mission is "to help families build pathways out of poverty and was, this past fall a member the Governor's Ten Year Budget Funding Team focusing on public safety.

I chose to come to Salem today and testify before you because I believe in the work you are doing to find additional resources to bring to local law enforcement, drug courts and community corrections. The modest reforms you have identified for Measure 11 and Measure 57 are smart policy choices. I am tough on crime and I believe in holding people accountable for the crimes they commit and fully recognize the need to send people to prison and jail when they commit crimes. That was a major focus of my professional life for thirty years. I also saw the need to have resources and supports available for individuals leaving the prison system so that they would not return. I strongly believe our dollars are best invested on prevention and local intervention to assist those people in returning to society as productive members of our community. These are areas where the budgets have been in steady decline. Prevention and intervention an essential part of our public safety system and they are key factors in breaking the cycle of criminality and the cycle of violence.

It takes courage to make the changes we need to our public safety system and I commend you all for your work.

Figuring out where to best put our system resources is tricky work. The investment requires more than just policy changes, local politics can, at times, create barriers to "a new way of doing business" which can lead to cost savings. In 2003, as the Gresham Police Chief, working in partnership with our neighboring City police departments, we were able to engage the collective political will, to form the East Metro Gang Enforcement Team. Crime – and those who commit crime – don't stop at city borders. We needed to consolidate our resources to address gang behavior and the crimes associated with that behavior. We came together to do that work, which allowed this multi agency gang team to address those gang issues in a proactive, preventative way. Did we still arrest gang members? You bet we did. Did we bring education on ways to recognize early signs of potential gang influence in our schools and communities? Yes we did. Do I believe this prevented crime? Yes, I do.

Was this a cost savings investment? Yes, it was. With the bulk of gang related calls being handled by the East Metro Gang Enforcement Team, patrol officers were now able to focus on the calls for service

in their respective communities. This allowed for proactive patrol, quicker response times to calls as well as time to be visible within their communities. This truly "stretched each dollar to the max".

Drug courts and our local community corrections offices are a first point of intervention for people who are on the cusp of going deeper into crime. I am a big fan of the flexibility drug courts and what community courts offer to help that population of people become successful. It is critical that when we hold people accountable for their crimes by restricting their freedom through jail, prison or probation; ensuring that they pay restitution to victims and more- that we also do what we can to make sure those people don't commit crimes in the future. Our drug courts are a great vehicle for that important work and they have seen persistent cuts in funding. This is not good public safety policy.

We all know that prevention is more effective and less expensive than prison or jail and we must ensure our public safety dollars prioritize those resources.

And this why I am here before you today. Having 30 years of police service, I was around when Measure 11 was introduced and I do support the sentencing reforms proposed in HB 3194. I have always had concerns about how Measure 11 sentences can be imposed on people who could be held accountable in more appropriate, effective and cost-efficient ways. I recall a young man who pulled a very stupid prank and robbed a Gresham pizza parlor with a toy gun. It was undoubtedly a terrifying situation for the people involved. This young man had no other contact with police and was fundamentally a good kid. He was sent to prison under Measure 11. Did he need to be held accountable for his actions? Yes he did. However, I think with more judicial discretion a better sentence could have been handed down. This is just one example.

We have become too punitive as a society and it's not what works best for public safety. Some would like us to lock people up and throw away the key, but they are not necessarily looking at the "bigger picture". The cost involved with incarceration and re-offending. I was invested and am still invested in making sure these people who commit crimes are held accountable and that we give them opportunities to succeed. I believe that HB 3194 helps to move us in the right direction to make that possible.

Thank you for your time and consideration.