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# **OREGON STATE SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION & OREGON ASSOCIATION CHIEFS OF POLICE TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HOUSE BILL 3194**

**Before the Joint Public Safety Committee / April 5, 2013**

**By: Jason Myers, Marion County Sheriff**

**President, Oregon State Sheriffs' Association / Member, Public Safety Commission**

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Co-Chairs Prozanki, Winters, Garrett and Olson and members of the Committee:

I have spent many hours reflecting on all of our Commission work and reviewing the final Commission report and House Bill 3194. I continue to be conflicted about the product we created. I believe there are aspects of this bill which, if properly funded and implemented, could produce strong, evidence-based public safety policy.

That being said, I want to emphasize that Sheriffs and Chiefs have not and will not advocate these policy changes because they save money or help prevent Oregon from building another prison. As peace officers, we do not support policy changes based solely on potential savings or to balance budgets. Rather, Sheriffs and Chiefs want to reduce crime and reduce recidivism because it makes our communities safer. Front-end, community-based and evidence-based corrections policies are good for Oregon because they work, not because they are cheaper than a penitentiary. Public safety reform should be driven by thoughtful policy and not based on cost savings.

It is very important for me to be clear with the committee on this point: We believe in a strong, adequately funded criminal justice system. We are also acutely concerned of the decline in funding for community corrections over the last 4-years and resolute in our belief that if evidence-based community corrections programs are not fully-funded with a long-term commitment by the state, they will not yield the results you expect and Oregonians deserve. As a Sheriff who is responsible for community corrections, I have seen first hand how evidence-based practices and a balance of supervision, sanctions, and services can truly save lives and make communities safer.

There are also aspects of House Bill 3194 that cause Sheriffs and Police Chiefs a great deal of concern and that we know will not be good public safety policy. The professional public safety community including Sheriffs, Chiefs and District Attorneys have been unwaveringly direct from the first day of the commission's work that we will not support any reforms which substantially impact the very successful mandatory minimum sentencing established by Ballot Measures 11 and 57. These mandatory minimum sentences have worked exactly as they were intended: they put the most dangerous offenders behind bars for an appropriately long period of time.

Although we are not of the belief that mandatory minimums provide a perfect solution to crime, we do believe measures 11 and 57 are reflective of our state's desire to hold accountable and incapacitate those who commit the most serious crimes within our community. We understand that making the substantial changes to measures 11 and 57 which are embodied in HB3194 may save the state of Oregon a lot of money. But, the cost to our community safety is just too high a price to pay for the expected savings.

As the members of the Joint Public Safety Committee and the Public Safety Subcommittee of the Joint Ways and Means Committee continue to work on these important decisions, your elected Sheriffs and your Chiefs of Police will continue to be at the table working with you side-by-side until we can create a product that solves our state's financial crisis without creating a future public safety crisis. Oregon has one of the best corrections systems in the nation, and I know we are all committed to ensuring the ongoing strengths of that system.

**Oregon State Sheriffs' Association**

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