

**Testimony before Joint Committee on Public Safety  
HB 3194  
Curtis Bearcub  
PHOENIX Rising Transitions  
& Metropolitan Alliance for Common Good  
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Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee, for the record my name is Curtis Bearcub. I am a member of PHOENIX Rising Transitions and a leader with the Metropolitan Alliance for Common Good – or MACG. PHOENIX is a community-based mentor project working with people before and after release from prison. PHOENIX is a member of MACG – a group of churches, synagogues, unions and nonprofits working together for positive change in Portland.

My participation in MACG started when I took PHOENIX's leadership class at Columbia River Correctional Institution. MACG members came into the prison to help with the training. This set me on a new path – much different than any I had taken in the past. Before, I couldn't quite get it right. At least that's how it looked to me. Believe it or not, my in-laws *bet* on how quickly I would be back in jail. Their denigration of me made me feel worthless. But this time I had prepared for something different. I took PHOENIX's leadership and Nonviolent Communication classes and met and chose my PHOENIX mentors a year before I came home. During that year, we worked together twice a week—learning community organizing and communication skills. These new skills and relationships helped me to identify key components of my own transition. With an intention I had never before employed, I went about achieving my goals. I am reconnecting with my kids, I am going to college, and I have a job. If people were betting on me now, I'd tell them to bet on the new Curtis Bearcub staying out of prison and working toward good things in my community.

I started volunteering with MACG's Prison & Community Action Team last fall. I recognized people who had come into the prison to teach. It was great to connect with them again . . . this time as a community member. On the Action Team, former prisoners and ordinary citizens worked together to identify our shared interests and concerns about public safety. We saw that prison costs were growing at a high rate and that reentry programs like mentoring were underfunded. Since mentoring has been important in my own transformation, I wanted to act. I came to Salem last Fall to a Sentencing Commission hearing and am here again today as a MACG leader urging you to invest public safety dollars on programs that really do make a difference. I know first-hand the power of these programs to change lives and make our communities safer in ways that prison can't.

Metropolitan Alliance for Common Good supports House Bill 3194. We urge your support as well.

Thank you.