



PORTLAND BUSINESS ALLIANCE

Leading the way

**Testimony of Bernie Bottomly
Portland Business Alliance
Joint Committee on Public Safety
In Support of HB 3194
Friday, April 5, 2013**

Co-chairs, members of the committee, I am Bernie Bottomly, Vice President of Government Relations and Economic Development for the Portland Business Alliance. The Alliance represents more than 1,300 small, medium and large employers in the greater Portland area.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today in support of HB 3194.

The Alliance is a strong supporter of effective and robust public safety investments. As you can imagine, our member firms and their employees benefit from safe communities as a critical foundation for a successful business environment. They understand both the human and financial cost of under-investing in our public safety system.

We are business people who understand the need for data driven decision making, a focus on continuous improvement, and doing what works to achieve the outcomes we need. The work of the Governor's Public Safety Commission embodies those same values. Their report to the Governor shows that Oregon has been doing relatively well in reducing crime over the past decades. However their report also shows trends that, if not redirected, will shortly require the addition of a new state prison at a significant cost to the public.

It is prudent when faced with the prospect of huge additional expenditures to examine whether there are effective alternatives that provide equal or better public safety outcomes with lower fiscal impacts. By, using a data-driven approach, the Public Safety Commission's report provides a road map for alternatives which accomplish those twin goals of effectiveness and reduced cost.

To be clear, the business community wants to hold people who commit crimes accountable for their actions. For sanctions to be effective as a deterrent they must be swift and certain and there must be resources devoted to ensuring appropriate sanctions are available. That said, our experience in Portland shows the use of sanctions are most effective when paired with programs that help address the root causes of much criminal behavior: drug and alcohol abuse, mental illness, unemployment and poor education.

We believe there is an opportunity to adjust the direction of Oregon's corrections system in such a way to avert the need for additional prison beds, , maintain accountability for offenders and have better public safety outcomes. By investing those cost savings into proven and effective programs such as, police, community corrections, addiction and mental health treatment and re-entry programs, we can achieve the best return on our public safety dollars.

We support the recommendations for those adjustments in sentencing and corrections policy made by the Public Safety Commission and contained in HB 3194, and urge you to pass this Public Safety Package.