

Rolando Ramirez
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TO: Joint Committee on Public Safety
FROM: Rolando Ramirez
DATE: April 5, 2013
RE: Support for H.B. 3194 Public Safety Package

Co-chairs and Members of the Committee:

My name is Rolando Ramirez, and I've been with the Oregon Youth Authority since 1999. Since my first day I have held the same job working for the Office of Minority Services with my main assignment at MacLaren in Woodburn. I work with minority youth, focusing specifically on Latino/Hispanic youth and their families to ensure that they have access to services that are culturally and language appropriate. I've been doing a gang intervention group for about 10 years. I'm the technical support person for what is called "Street Smarts" gang intervention and treatment at the facility.

While I work for OYA, I am here to speak for myself in support of the package of public safety measures in House Bill 3194.

Knowing how little time I have before you, let me get right to the point. When it comes to youth and kids in the criminal justice system, one size does not fit all. Surely one thread that is consistent is that we need to hold youth accountable, and I can speak from experience on that issue as well. But from there, the issues get very gray. And our systems need to be gray if we are to adequately serve victims, incarcerated youth, and taxpayers, as well as provide needed resources for prevention programs.

I am very supportive of "second look". It is an added incentive for youth to start taking care of business when they know they can earn the opportunity to reduce their sentence and begin to rebuild their lives in the community. Second look in no way guarantees release. It gives kids a chance to say and show that they deserve another shot. Giving back judicial authority on some Measure 11

crimes will also free up OYA bed space from youth that are ready to go back under supervised transition and help us deal with the many kids who should be coming into our programs every day.

Before I worked with OYA, my mindset was different than it is now. My brother, Raul Ramirez, worked for the Marion County Sheriff's Office for some thirty years and served as Sheriff for 10 years until his retirement. I have another brother who worked for the Department of Corrections. My sister-in-law was a defense attorney. I used to say, "My brother arrests them, my sister-in-law defends them, and I guard them." But after doing this work for awhile, I now say, "And I help them transition back into the community."

I've met hundreds of Measure 11 kids. And the tragedy for many of them is that after participating in our programs at OYA and going through the hills and valleys of being held accountable they are ready to move on – but cannot due to a set sentence and no second look. They have faced up to the hurts that they have caused; and been trained on de-escalating violence; moderating their emotions and learning basic citizenship skills – things that some were never taught as children. We should be giving them a pathway of controlled supervision back to being productive citizens. But most times we cannot.

Youth who come to OYA as "DOC commits" don't have the luxury of sitting around in our facilities waiting to get ready for life in DOC. In some cases, after years of us providing opportunities and resources for them to engage in, do you know the way they prepare for the future in DOC? By lifting weights and mentally preparing for what some think is the real life in DOC. This is pretty much the exact opposite of how things have worked for them on at OYA.

Based on years of experience with OYA, I feel strongly that "second look" and the Measure 11 changes in H.B. 3194 would have a positive impact on our youth who are committed as adults. I will end there knowing about your time limits, but I welcome any questions you may have for me. Thank you very much.