

# Youth, Rights & Justice

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

To: House Committee on Judiciary, 2013 Oregon Legislature

From: Mark McKechnie, Exec. Director, Youth, Rights & Justice

Date: May 6, 2013

Re: Comments on HB 3509

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Chair Barker and Members of the Committee:

We are sympathetic to Oregon neighborhoods that are overburdened by nuisance businesses that attract a disproportionate amount of criminal activity such as substance abuse. Legitimate treatment programs do not belong in this category, however. Youth, Rights & Justice wants to ensure that treatment for sex offenders remains available for youth who are adjudicated of these types of offenses because these programs are effective.

While communities may perceive a threat when these programs are located nearby, the data clearly show that juvenile sex offenders have very low re-offense rates overall, and effective treatment further reduces risk of re-offense. Numerous studies have repeatedly found low-recidivism rates among these offenders:

- Youth who receive treatment recidivate at low rates. Juvenile sex offenders leaving OYA recidivate with a new sex offense at a rate of **less than 4%**. (OYA Director Collette Peters testimony to Senate Judiciary, 6/14/11)
- A study of 2,029 youth offenders in Wisconsin found that the recidivism rates of juvenile sex offenders was **7%** and the rate of sex offenses among offenders who had not previously committed a sex offense, and were, therefore, not registered, was 6%. There was no statistically significant difference in future offense rates between registered and non-registered youth offenders. (Caldwell, 2007)
- Recidivism rates of all male juveniles with sex crime convictions (N = 1,275) were examined across an average 9-year follow-up. The sexual offense reconviction rate was **less than 3%** for this study. (Letourneau, E. J., Bandyopadhyay, D., Sinha, D., & Armstrong, K. S. 2009)

Treatment programs protect public safety because they hold youth accountable. Communities where these programs are located are no less safe because of the siting of these programs. The fact is that most new offenses are committed by people with no previous convictions. In New York state, a large study found that 95.88% of all arrests for registerable sex crimes were of persons not previously convicted. (Sandler, Jeffrey, et. al., 2008)

Treatment programs for youth should be regulated, and they are regulated through contracts with state agencies. Individual clinicians are also regulated through licensing boards and other bodies. Programs for youth, in particular, are often run by non-profit organizations, and it is important that they are not overburdened by onerous siting processes or procedures.

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