

Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to express my overall support for HB 2549. This is sensible legislation that appropriately and effectively considers both the betterment of public safety and the importance of the rehabilitation and re-entry of many persons convicted of sex crimes.

HB 2549 deserves our support because it,

A) Establishes a risk-based tier system. An evidence-based approach to assessment more accurately interprets an ex-offender's risk of re-offending. This management system rightly acknowledges that not all of Oregon's sex offender registrants are predatory or sexually violent, allows law enforcement to concentrate their focus on those who truly dangerous, and better educates citizens as to which persons might be or become an actual societal threat.

B) Provides registrants the opportunity to petition for tier reclassification, and allows a some registrants to seek relief from registration and reporting requirements. Registered offenders should have the ability to challenge their placement in a higher tier, given that each individual is unique, and because an initial risk assessment evaluation might prove inconclusive. Persons convicted of lesser crimes should be afforded the opportunity to seek registration relief; from a public safety perspective it make sense to give such persons the incentive to become responsible, stable, and productive members of society.

C) Restricts listing on the public web page to those in higher tiers. Oregon already restricts online listing to show information for predatory offenders only. Although not considered punitive by legal/working definition, online listing adversely and unnecessarily affects registrants and their families. Not only does it shame and stigmatize and make employment and housing more difficult to obtain, it also can be psychologically devastating as it reinforces the idea that the registrant is—and will always be—a bad person. To discourage one from rehabilitation and reentry only encourages one to re-offend. Most important, the alternative of an all-inclusive online listing does nothing to protect communities. (I'm not aware of a case in which the registry has actually proven to prevent a sex crime.)

Although I support this bill in general, I recommend the Static-99 assessment tool not be the only basis for evaluation, since it has the potential to discriminate against juvenile/young offenders, and, among other things, to score a predatory offender lower than a non-predatory offender. Although no assessment instrument is perfect, I encourage the legislature and principal stakeholders in this process to continue to examine alternatives to the Static-99 that might yield better results.

As a concerned citizen I wish to thank the Committee's leadership for its months of hard work and its effort to steer Oregon in the direction of informed, "smart-on-crime" policymaking.

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