

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 2552

Submitted to the House Judiciary Committee, Oregon State Legislature
By Shannon Wight, Associate Director, Partnership for Safety and Justice
February 28, 2013

Chair Barker, Members of the Committee:

I am the Associate Director for the Partnership for Safety and Justice. Partnership for Safety and Justice is a statewide advocacy organization that advocates for smart public safety policy – which to us means advocating for victims and survivors of crime, as well as for people convicted of crime – to create policies that create a more effective public safety system. I have worked in the criminal and juvenile justice field for 20 years, including co-founding a youth law and advocacy office in Louisiana.

I am here today on behalf of Partnership for Safety and Justice in support of House Bill 2552, which removes some of the barriers youth face when trying to access the existing process available for relief from sex offender registration.

These registries were created to improve public safety by alerting the public about people who were at risk of committing future offenses. We now know that juveniles who are convicted of committing sex offenses are extremely unlikely to commit a future offense, particularly if they receive counseling or treatment. National studies have found that 4 to 14% of these youth will commit another offense. This is consistent with a February 2011 report by the Research and Evaluation in the Oregon Youth Authority, “*OYA Recidivism Risk Assessment – Violent Crime.*” That report found at less than 8% of youth commit another sex offense. These findings, both locally and nationally, are in stark contrast to previously held beliefs about the propensity of people convicted of sex offenses to commit future crimes. This new knowledge should guide our policies.

House Bill 2552 is a step in the right direction in improving our registration policies relating to juveniles. Registration can only be effective if it is applied to people who are truly at risk to offend in the future.

Unnecessarily putting youth on the registry can have the impact of breaking up families, preventing youth from obtaining employment and becoming successful and contributing members of our communities. HB 2552 is a thoughtful and narrow step in making our juvenile registration laws more consistent with the reality of juveniles who commit sex offenses – the vast majority will not commit another offense.

I urge your support of House Bill 2552.