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# OREGON STATE SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

## TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 417

In writing before the Senate Judiciary Committee / March 14, 2013

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Chair Prozanski and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

The Oregon State Sheriffs' Association is comprised of Oregon's 36 elected county sheriffs. Sheriffs take seriously their charge to be "conservators of the peace." Their role in public safety is broad, including routine patrol, investigating crime, search and rescue, marine patrol, jails, community corrections, court security, civil services and the issuance of concealed handgun licenses.

Oregon Sheriffs apologize for not appearing in person on a topic of this magnitude. Oregon Sheriffs are gathered for a Spring Conference, which has been scheduled for some time.

Sheriffs are adamant that allegations of abuse in county jails should be thoroughly and professionally investigated to ensure the safety of jail inmates and corrections staff. In fact, Oregon Sheriffs actively lobbied in support of the Federal "Prison Rape Elimination Act" which was adopted by Congress in 2003.

While Sheriffs firmly believe they are already doing an exceptional job of taking seriously allegations of abuse in their jails, they are always willing to engage in ongoing conversations on how to improve. In that spirit, they applaud Senator Close for introducing this bill and they are interested in working with her. However, Sheriffs do have some reservations about parts of the bill as drafted. First, Sheriffs do not support dual reporting obligations which could create multiple investigations and duplicate efforts. There simply is not a good reason to include the Attorney General in reporting requirements. Second, Sheriffs believe the scope of the bill should include any county jail staff, not just corrections officers.

This bill raises an important issue with serious implications. Sheriffs look forward to working with the Department of Corrections and Senator Close to ensure correctional facilities are using best practices when it comes to abuse reporting.