



Legislative Testimony

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

February 3, 2014

The Honorable Jeff Barker, Chair
House Judiciary Committee

RE: House Bill 4035

Chair Barker and members of the House Judiciary Committee, I am Leonard Williamson, Inspector General for the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC). I am here to testify in opposition of HB 4035 and answer any questions you may have.

What the Bill Does:

HB 4035 allows DOC correctional officers to carry and store weapons in their personal vehicle while parked in the department parking lot, as long as the officer is coming on work business, has an Oregon concealed handgun license, and the weapon is locked in a “gun box” inside of the vehicle.

Issues Created for DOC by this Bill:

The department has historically opposed this concept for two reasons: (1) the security and safety challenges the concept poses for the operation of Oregon’s prisons; and (2) the significant legal liability issues that are raised by permitting firearms on the grounds of our correctional institutions. However, we recognize that there are also competing personal safety concerns that this bill attempts to address that are important to our employees and to the department. These concerns include, but are not limited to, the safety of our staff as they commute sometimes long distances between home and work.

We have yet to fully explore the liability issues raised by this concept with the Department of Justice and the Department of Administrative Services. We believe it is critically important that we and the Legislative Assembly fully explore these issues as part of any policy discussion of this concept. If, after a complete and thorough review of these issues we conclude that legislation in this area is warranted, the legislation must properly address the department’s and State’s liability risk.

Finally, we are concerned that if there is to be legislation in this area, subject to further review, the legislation should address the personal safety concerns of all our employees with concealed handgun licenses, and not just the department’s security staff.

Requested Action:

The department is committed to work with our labor partners and other stakeholders to ensure the safety and security of our institutions and facilities, the safety of all of our employees, our adults in custody and the public. However, the policy and legal issues raised by this concept are

many and complex. There simply is not enough time during this short legislative session for the department to obtain and evaluate the information necessary to conduct the complete and thorough review of the issues raised by this concept in time to provide this body with our policy recommendations. For these reasons, the department urges that this committee not move HB 4035 out of committee this session in order to permit the department the time that is needed, before the next regular session of the Legislative Assembly, to conduct a complete and thorough exploration and evaluation of the issues raised by this concept. We look forward to the opportunity to report back to this body our findings and recommendations on these important issues.

There is no known fiscal impact associated with this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Submitted by:

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