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TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 780

SENATE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

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INTRODUCTION:

FIRST I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THIS COMMITTEE FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO TESTIFY.

I AM DR. STANULIS, A FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGIST/NEUROPSYCHOLOGIST WHO SEES VETERANS IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM DAILY; I ALSO SERVE ON THE WESTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AND AM A BOARD MEMBER OF THE BUNKER PROJECT; I AM PROUD TO BE A CO-AUTHOR AND CO-RESEARCHER WITH VETERANS SUCH AS BRYAN THIES, KYLE RODGERS, AND MOST ESPECIALLY DR. BROWN, THE COUNTRY'S LEADING EXPERT ON VETERANS AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE. THE INFORMATION I PRESENT TODAY IS THE RESULT OF THIS ONGOING COLLABORATIVE EFFORT TO PROVIDE INFORMATION BASED ON THE BEST AVAILABLE RESEARCH.

MY PRESENTATION IS BROKEN DOWN INTO DIFFERENT PARTS: FACTS, POLICY, AND IMPLEMENTATION

FIRST THE FACTS: AS IT HAS BEEN SAID EVERYONE IS "ENTITLED TO YOUR OWN OPINION; JUST NOT YOUR OWN FACTS:"

FACTS:

1. OREGON HAS A PROBLEM: 19.1% OF PRISONERS ARE VETS (SEE CHART)
2. IT IS GROWING: FROM 2007-2011 MARION COUNTY JAIL VETERAN POPULATION INCREASED FROM 5% TO 10 %
3. VETERANS ENTER THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM BECAUSE OF PROBLEMS RELATED TO MILITARY SERVICE AND MILITARY RELATED MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS; THE 2010 LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE CONCLUDED THAT "MANY VETERANS ARE ENGAGING LAW ENFORCEMENT DUE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, VIOLENT OUTBURSTS, ERRATIC DRIVING AND OTHER VIOLATIONS THAT CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO THEIR SERVICE";
4. MOST RECENT EPIDEMIOLOGICAL RESEARCH: 38 % OF OEF/OIF/OND VETERANS IN PRISON HAVE PTSD; 57-61% HAVE DRUG/ALCOHOL DIAGNOSIS;
5. TREATMENT LOWERS RECIDIVISM BECAUSE OF THE LINK BETWEEN PTSD/SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND CRIME;
6. PTSD/MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS CAUSE ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE
7. LACK OF INTERVENTION IS DEADLY: VETS ARE 8.7% OF OREGON'S POPULATION BUT 23% OF THE SUICIDES
8. ALCOHOL ABUSE IS IMPLICATED IN 1/3 OF OREGON VETERAN SUICIDES
9. IN OREGON, SUICIDE IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH IN VETERANS UNDER 45;

POLICY:

1. OREGON HAS RECOGNIZED THE NEED TO IDENTIFY VETERANS WITH PROBLEMS AND THE NEED TO INTERVENE: EACH VET IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IS A FAILURE TO BE RECOGNIZED AND INTERVENE APPROPRIATELY BEFORE ARREST.
2. DOC POLICY OF NON-INTERVENTION IS NOT BASED ON SCIENCE AND CAN BE SEEN AS AGAINST PREVIOUS LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS.
3. ONLY THE STATE CAN INTERVENE; VA WON'T IN PRISON
4. IT IS COST EFFECTIVE ; IT LOWERS RECIDIVISM
5. NOT TREATING PTSD IN VET WITH ALCOHOL/DRUG PROBLEMS IS LIKE TREATING THE PAIN, NOT THE UNDERLYING CANCER CAUSING THE PAIN

OTHER ISSUES THAT THAT THIS COMMITTEE NEEDS TO CONSIDER:

VETERANS WITH PTSD ARE COVERED BY THE AMERICAN WITH DISABLITY ACT; VETERANS HAVE "EARNED" THEIR RIGHT TO TREATMENT; THE STATE HAS AT LEAST SOME DUTY TO FOLLOW LEGISLATIVE TASK FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO RECOGNIZE VETERANS' PROBLEMS AND INTERVENE.

IT IS MY STRONG BELIEF THAT FAILURE TO PASS THIS MEASURE IS A FAILURE OF WILL AND A FAILURE TO THE DUTY WE OWE OUR VETERANS.

IMPLEMENTATION:

1. NEEDS TO BE EVIDENCE DRIVEN; IT WILL NEED TO TREAT BOTH MORAL INJURY PTSD AND FEAR DRIVEN PTSD WITH KNOWN TECHNIQUES AND TRACK OUTCOME;
2. REQUIRES PROVIDERS THAT ARE CULTURALLY COMPETENT AND SENSITIVE TO MILITARY CULTURE AND HOW THAT CULTURE SHAPES PTSD SYMPTOMS DIFFERENTLY THAN CIVILIAN CULTURE.
3. NEEDS TO INCLUDE A RELIABLE WAY TO IDENTIFY AT INTAKE VETERANS AND DISABILITY STATUS AND TREATMENT NEEDS.

SUMMARY:

THERE IS A PROBLEM WITH VETERANS IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM THAT WILL CONTINUE TO GROW. THE FAILURE TO TREAT PTSD AND CO-OCCURRING SUBSTANCE ABUSE IS DEADLY AND HARMS SOCIETY THRU RECIDIVISM. ONLY THE STATE CAN FIX THIS PROBLEM.

PASSAGE OF THIS BILL IS NOT ONLY A WIN FOR VETERANS; IT SHOULD HAVE A POSITIVE ECONOMIC IMPACT ON EASTERN OREGON AND THE BAKER CITY AREA.

MOST IMPORTANTLY IT IS A WIN FOR SOCIETY, VETERAN FAMILIES, AND MOST OF ALL FOR THE VETERAN WHO SERVED OUR COUNTRY AND STATE AND NOW IS IN THE POSITION OF NEEDING TREATMENT FOR INJURIES INCURRED DURING THAT MILITARY SERVICE.

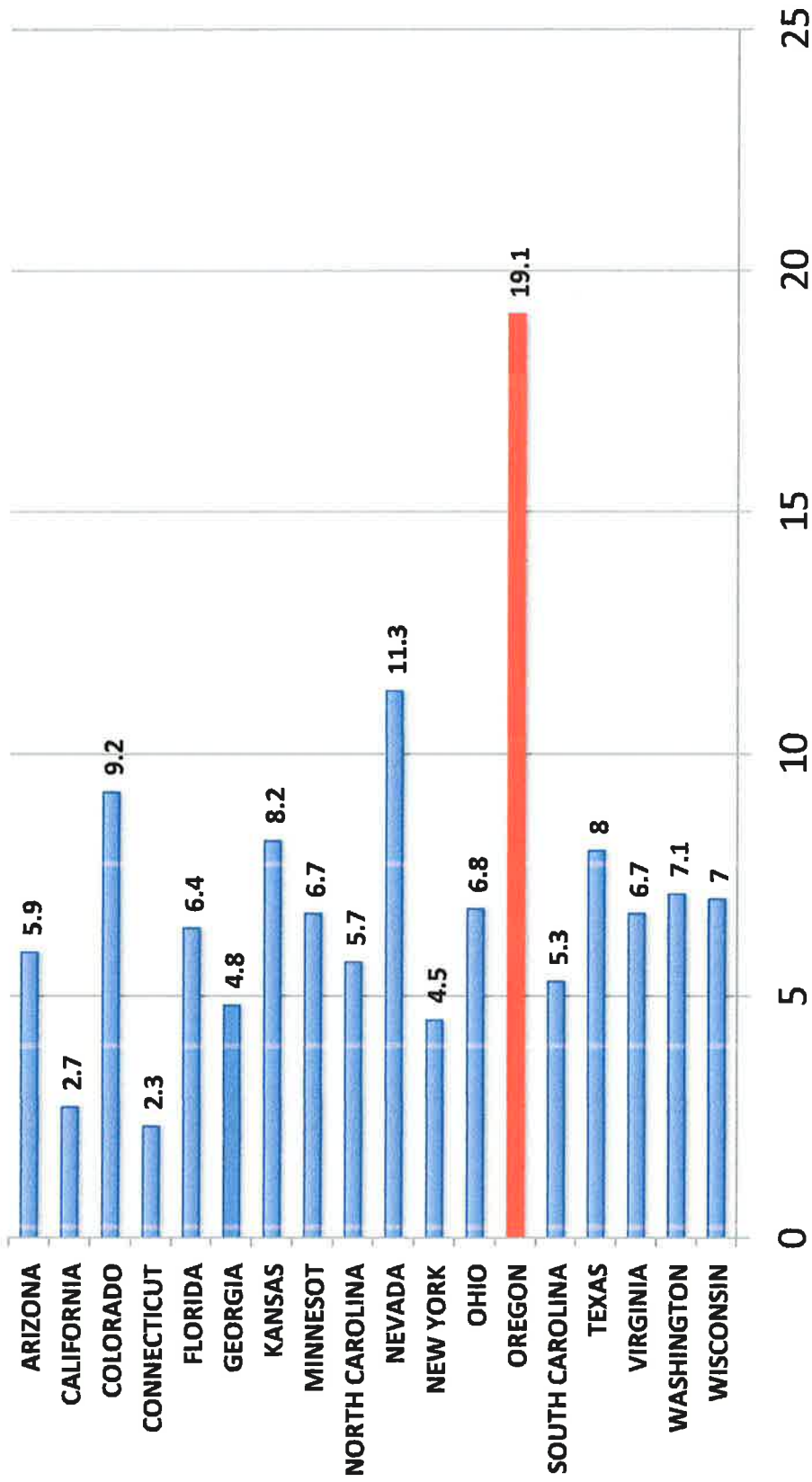
I URGE THAT THIS BILL BE PASSED. I AND MY COLLEAGUES ARE WILLING TO ASSIST THE DOC IN THE IMPLEMENTION PROCESS.

I AM GLAD TO TRY AND ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS THAT THIS COMMITTEE MIGHT HAVE AT THIS TIME OR IN THE FUTURE.

THANK YOU.

PERCENTAGE OF VETERANS IN STATE PRISON POPOPULATIONS

Randomly Selected States – 2013 Study



Brown, W., Stanulis, R., Theis, B., Farnsworth, J. and Daniels, D. (2013). "The Perfect Storm: Veterans, culture and the criminal justice system." Justice Policy Journal, Vol. 10, Number 2 (Fall)