



**Testimony of Dave Williams  
Citizens Crime Commission  
Public Safety Ways and Means Committee  
May 14, 2015  
Support for HB 3194**

Good afternoon Co-Chairs Williamson and Shields and committee members, thank you for all your work and for giving me this opportunity to speak to you. My name is Dave Williams, I am the Vice President of Utility Services for Northwest Natural Gas, and former Chair of the Citizens Crime Commission. I have been with NW Natural for 37 years and have been involved with the Crime Commission for close to a decade. I am here today in support of full Justice Reinvestment funding as part of the public safety reforms contained in HB 3194. We join other business associations in supporting public safety reforms as part of the Business Plan to help grow Oregon's economy by making wise investments of our public dollars.

For two decades, the Citizens Crime Commission has brought a business perspective to public safety policy and practices. We have worked closely with government officials, criminal justice professionals and lawmakers to make Oregon's state and local communities safer. During that time, we have seen a lot of successes in crime reduction thanks to policy decisions investing scarce resources in the right places. But we are also aware of troubling trends in our state that threaten to erode the headway we've made toward safer communities.

While I am not a policy expert on corrections, our board followed the work of the Governor's Public Safety Commission made up of experts, and appreciate their comprehensive examination of the data and trends in corrections. Their report highlights the strength of Oregon's public safety system. We have generally used our prisons for violent crimes and sex offenses. But the report also highlighted

the unmistakable trend towards using more of our prison beds for persons convicted of nonviolent offenses. That trend, if left unaltered, would have meant the Prison Director Peters would be in the process of opening a previously closed prison, and building a new prison at a cost of \$600 million in tax payer money over the next decade.

But we are starting to see a change in that trajectory as a result of HB 3194. The bill provides a balanced roadmap for evidence based reforms that has just begun to show results in prison savings. Those savings are projected to be \$53 million dollars in this next biennium as a result of the moderate sentencing changes in HB 3194. However is it not enough to simply change incarceration policies. More importantly, HB 3194 also contains provisions that directs the prison savings be reinvested in local communities to work collaboratively and innovatively to reduce their reliance on prison while maintaining public safety.

Fully funding these reinvestment efforts now, will create even more savings in the future from reduced prison use. We urge using the savings from the averted prison growth be reinvested into communities to do what works to reduce recidivism and increase public safety by funding police, victim services, community corrections, and evidence based treatment for addiction and mental issues that feed criminal behavior.

In Multnomah County alone, I have seen the results of Justice Reinvestment efforts that are reducing the use of prison beds and enabling people to successfully stay in the community to lead more productive crime free lives. The initial grant of 3 million to Multnomah County for reinvestment efforts is projected to save the state 8.6 million in state general fund dollars in just one year.

We support the common sense balanced long term approach to public safety contained in HB 3194. We believe such reforms are delivering accountability, justice and a better return on Oregon's public safety dollars.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. Again, I ask your support for full Justice Reinvestment grant funding in the amount of \$53 million as part of SB 5506.