



From the Desk of
Representative
Carla C. Piluso



May 14, 2015

In 2013, the Oregon Legislature passed House Bill 3194, which was aimed at reducing the rapid growth in Oregon prison populations and reduce costs associated with prison construction and operation. A key component of HB3194 was establishment of community-based justice reinvestment programs designed to reduce crime and recidivism by dealing directly with at-risk individuals in their home communities. This program was a key component of the 2013 Oregon Business Plan legislative agenda because we collectively believe that getting control of rapidly rising prison costs is key to the state's long-term ability to increase investments in other critical areas such as education and social services.

The business community has united around public safety reform for two reasons: 1) the data was clear: other states found more cost-efficient and effective means for dealing with non-violent offenders than mandatory minimum sentencing, and 2) savings in the budget would free up resources for higher education, which has lost ground in almost every biennium in the last two decades, as well as other potential state programs.

We are very pleased that, after just over a year of implementation, the promise of HB3194 is being realized. Oregon's forecasted prison population trajectory is already declining as the sentencing changes in HB 3194 are implemented. In addition, prison populations are starting to reflect local efforts to reduce the use of prison. Leaders from the five Oregon counties that account for 63 percent of the state's prison population – Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas, Marion and Lane – regularly work together to identify justice reinvestment programs and strategies that work so that the state funds available for this effort are spent in the most effective way possible.

As you know, in his proposed 2015-2017 budget, Gov. John Kitzhaber has proposed a continued investment of \$53 million in the community-based justice reinvestment grants so that local governments across Oregon can continue the efforts they have launched to keep individuals out of prison. This funding essentially represents the projected savings the state will realize through a reduction in the projected prison population during that biennium.



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As representatives of Oregon's business community, we ask you to support that level of funding for justice reinvestment in the upcoming biennium. Over the long term, we believe even greater savings will be achieved and those funds will be available for investment in other critical programs instead of prisons.

Thank you for your attention to this issue. We look forward to working with you during the legislative session on this and other important issues.

Sincerely,

Jay Clemens
Associated Oregon Industries

Ryan Deckert
Oregon Business Association

Duncan Wyse
Oregon Business Council

Sam Brooks
Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs

Sandra McDonough
Portland Business Alliance

cc: Speaker Kotek
President Courtney