

The Honorable Jackie Winters, Co-Chair
The Honorable Duane Stark, Co-Chair
Members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety
900 Court Street
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs and members of the Committee:

I am writing to you as a parent of a youth who is in OYA's custody. More importantly, I am writing as the parent of the OYA youth (Johnathan Baker) who had the privilege of conducting the Committee's tour of MacLaren Thursday afternoon. I am going to be 100% honest and transparent with the fact that I was not inspired to write a letter until I received a phone call from Johnathan last night. He spent the entire 10 minutes describing his experience of engaging and interacting with the Committee members during the tour.

His phone call was a strong reminder of all the "good" that the OYA has provided our son. My letter to you is being written straight the heart; our son made a horrible mistake, he made a single decision that will be with him for the rest of his life. From day one, we have told him that this decision will not define the rest of your life. There are 2 blessings that occurred:

1. He was under the age of 18
2. That his crime took place in the state of Oregon

Our story is a very unique and amazing one and there is not enough time or paper for me to go into detail. What I will share is we live the realities of his situation every day and that the OYA has provided our son with so many opportunities that he would have never experienced if he had gone straight into the ODOC. The funds that support the OYA are vital to the continued success of OYA's efforts.

There is a cultural shift (slow but steady) within the agency to embrace Positive Human Development (PHD); viewing the youth as a resource and providing the youth with development tools and programs. In example, our son entered the OYA system with a 1.9 grade point average and in 2015 he graduated from high school with a 3.0. At the end of this term he will have completed his Associates Degree through Chemeketa Community College. Johnathan has been admitted into OSU's (Go Beavs!) online Business program, where he will complete his 4 year degree. For those youth who are not interested in attending college, the OYA offers many vocational opportunities and certifications. All of these opportunities contribute to the rehabilitation of the youth and greatly affect the success of transitioning back in to their communities.

The consolidation efforts are admirable and the need for updating the existing buildings at MacLaren is a necessity. I'm sure you took notice of this during your tour.

As you can see, this is not your typical form letter, this is mom, expressing her gratitude towards the OYA and the positive affects it has had on our son. I am also requesting that you continue to fund and support all of OYA's efforts.

I am offering to speak with any or all Committee members who are interested in continuing this conversation. Thank you for taking the time to tour MacLaren, shaking my son's hand and taking an interest in his opinions.

Respectfully,
Amy Cole
503-750-2882