



BRIDGES
to change

Creating Hope Through Community

March 31, 2017

Senate Judiciary Committee

Chair Senator Floyd Prozanski Sen.FloydProzanski@OregonLegislature.gov

Senator Kim Thatcher Sen.KimThatcher@state.or.us

Senator Michael Dembrow Sen.MichaelDembrow@state.or.us

Senator Dennis Linthicum sen.DennisLinthicum@oregonlegislature.gov

Senator James Manning Jr. sen.jamesmanning@oregonlegislature.gov

RE: In support of SB 692 (Hearing 3.14.17)

Dear Chair Prozanski:

I am writing to you to support SB 692. My organization works with men and women in Oregon who are reentering our communities from incarceration. Support at the beginning of their journey into jail or prison would go a long way to making the end of the process more feasible.

Almost everyone incarcerated in Oregon will return to the community at some point. The goal of this project is to take simple, inexpensive, preventative measures prior to incarceration that will reduce the chances of later recidivism and increase the chances of being able to return to the community, become a contributing citizen, and taking on the mantle of a responsible spouse and parent.

Most of these simple measures, when not performed, turn into impossibly complex barriers to success on re-entry. For example, if a contract or lease isn't terminated before entering incarceration and obligations aren't put on hold then they will build, double and accrue interest or penalties while the person is incarcerated. This then may result in defaults, being sent to collections and destroying people's credit and future potential. If these holds aren't discovered and resolved, they can prevent access to transitional leave and proper re-entry planning. If documents aren't properly secured, they can be difficult to replace and often result in identity theft that is impossible to unravel.

This bill will fund a **pre-entry** pilot program for Multnomah, Washington, and Douglas Counties that will provide access to a social worker for people who are being sentenced. The social worker will help clients make arrangements to suspend or defer obligations while incarcerated which will protect credit, avoid debt, and reduce multiple barriers to successful reentry – which is what we all want, which is what we as a society need.

This pilot will assure that a legal structure is in place for the security of family and children; put financial

10570 SE Washington St, Ste 201
Portland, OR 97216
Phone: 503-465-2749
Fax: 503-208-2596



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obligations and benefits on hold to avoid a bad credit history or accruing unnecessary additional debt (e.g. child support, student loans); secure valuable, difficult to replace documents such as a driver's license, birth certificates, and debit cards; resolve court holds and detainers; terminate rental agreements to avoid an eviction on rental history; and inform employers of the situation in order to avoid negative work history.

A relatively small investment at the front end will translate into major savings later, not just money, but saving lives as well. With appropriate screening to assist people in getting their affairs in order before they go into prison or jail, they're less likely to emerge from incarceration facing numerous urgent and difficult-to-solve problems. Avoiding these problems boosts their chances of successfully reintegrating and staying out of trouble – which benefits each and every community in Oregon.

With respect,

Monta Knudson

Executive Director

Email: monta@bridgestochange.com

Phone: 503 278 6719

10570 SE Washington St, Ste 201
Portland, OR 97216
Phone: 503-465-2749
Fax: 503-208-2596