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TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 844 For the Senate Judiciary Committee March 28, 2017

Submitted by:

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This testimony is presented in support of Senate Bill 844.

How This Bill Changes Current Law

Senate Bill 844 adds new provisions to Oregon law requiring the Department of Corrections to work with the Oregon Judicial Department and the Oregon Department of Justice to facilitate collection of court-ordered debts from inmate trust accounts. The bill requires the Department of Justice to provide to the Department of Corrections an accounting of court-ordered financial obligations owed by inmates, to receive monies collected for court-ordered financial obligations, and to apply collected monies to an inmate's court-ordered financial obligations. Child support obligations are prioritized in the second of three levels, and the bill allows the Department of Justice to create a subaccount to deposit monies received from the Department of Corrections.

This bill is the product of the Inmate Accountability Workgroup, led by the Department of Corrections with significant participation from the Department of Justice and the Oregon Judicial Department. All three state agencies have invested significant resources into developing and testing the feasibility of this legislative concept, and it has potential to increase collections of past due child support and reduce an inmate's debt for child support and other court-ordered obligations during incarceration, thereby improving the inmate's transition after release.

Key Points of Legislation

- Requires the Department of Justice to provide to the Department of Corrections an accounting of court-ordered financial obligations owed by inmates.

- Requires the Department of Justice to receive monies collected for court-ordered financial obligations and apply collected monies to an inmate's court-ordered financial obligations.
- Prioritizes child support obligations in the second of three levels for distribution of collections.
- Allows the Department of Justice to create a subaccount to deposit monies received from the Department of Corrections.
- Allows the Department of Justice to adopt rules for implementation.

Fiscal Impact

None.

Fiscal Benefits

Based on available data, the Oregon Child Support Program could slightly improve its performance on collections of past due child support as a result of this bill.

Recommended Action

The Department of Justice recommends committee approval of Senate Bill 844 in order to improve collections against court-ordered debts and outcomes for incarcerated parents after release from prison.