



Legislative Testimony

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

April 25, 2017

The Honorable Jeff Barker, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary

RE: Senate Bill 184

Chair Barker and members of the House Judiciary Committee, I am Heidi Steward, Assistant Director of the Offender Management and Rehabilitation Division for the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC). The department drafted SB 184 to update existing statute describing the sale of inmate made goods in Oregon. I am here to testify in support of the bill and answer any questions.

What the Bill Does:

Senate Bill 184 authorizes DOC to establish programming for selling inmate handicrafts.

Background Information:

Current statute allows adults in custody of the department to sell handiwork to the general public from a brick-and-mortar location or a correctional institution under the discretion of a facility superintendent. SB 184 removes the limiting reference to sales from corrections facilities and accurately reflects the department's centralized oversight and support of programming. Existing language dates back to the days when the prison system was a division of the Department of Human Services, and the Curio Store sat outside Oregon State Penitentiary on State Street.

Inmates in Oregon prisons have demonstrated remarkable handicraft abilities, evidenced all the way back to the saddle shop in our territorial prison in Oregon City. In the last biennium, through the innovation of department staff, we enhanced the programmatic and re-entry components of our inmate handicraft programs to maximize its rehabilitative potential. We worked with DAS and Oregon's e-commerce vendor, NICUSA, to create an e-commerce sales platform for inmate-made goods. This e-commerce platform eliminates the need for DOC employees to physically handle and manage the money of inmates. We also partnered with the Oregon Small Business Development Council (SBDC) to provide entrepreneurship and small business training to 45 inmate crafters, better enabling them to turn their artistic skills into a means of supporting themselves and their families, and making good on financial obligations today and through re-entry.

Issues Addressed by the Bill:

This bill modernizes statutory language to accurately reflect the current programming delegation and practices of the department. These minor changes ensure we can continue our innovative, low-cost programming that prepares men and women in custody for successful re-entry.

Requested Action:

For the reasons stated above, DOC supports SB 184, and encourages the committee to vote SB 184 out of committee with a do pass recommendation.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Submitted by:

Oregon Department of Corrections

Heidi Steward, Assistant Director

Heidi.Steward@doc.state.or.us

Phone: (503) 945-9055