



**Testimony of Kimberly McCullough, Policy Director
In Support of SB 82
House Committee on Judiciary
April 25, 2017**

Chair Barker and Members of the Committee:

The ACLU of Oregon¹ supports SB 82, which prohibits the use of isolation (placing a youth alone in a locked room) as a punishment for an offender who commits a rule violation in a youth correctional facility. As an organization dedicated to protecting civil liberties and human rights, the ACLU advocates for ending the use of solitary confinement, with a particular focus on stopping the solitary confinement of youth.

We want our youth facilities to help young people grow into productive adults, and not suffer the sometimes irreparable damages that result from the use of solitary confinement. Solitary confinement is psychologically and physically damaging, especially for young people because they are still developing. It exacerbates symptoms for those with mental disabilities and histories of trauma or abuse and can create new mental health problems for youth. This, in turn, can negatively impacts both the youth and facility staff's safety and well-being.

For these reasons, we are incredibly appreciative of how proactive the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) has been in addressing this issue. OYA has taken many steps to greatly reduce its use of solitary, including inviting the ACLU and other organizations and interested parties to participate in community advisory group on the use of isolation at OYA. OYA's openness, transparency, and thoughtfulness with the group has made the process meaningfully collaborative.

In many of its practices and programs, OYA acts as a model for other states around the country. OYA's work on the issue of isolation sets an example of how to transform youth facility practices in a way that will create positive and safe outcomes for our youth and communities. Codifying this policy into law will send a strong message and provide a guide for other states on how to make similar progress. Additionally, codifying this policy into law will ensure that Oregon's progress in this area is maintained.

For these reasons, the ACLU of Oregon urges your support of SB 82.

¹ The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to preservation and enhancement of civil liberties and civil rights with more than 37,000 members in the State of Oregon.