



Oregon Voices
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May 10, 2019

RE: HB 2360

TO: Senate Judiciary Committee
Sen. Floyd Prozanski, Chair
Sen. Kim Thatcher, Vice Chair
Sen. Michael Dembrow

Sen. Dennis Linthicum
Sen. James Manning Jr.

Cc: Rep. Jeff Barker

Rep. Andy Olson
Rep. Jennifer Williamson

Chairman Prozanski and members of the committee:

My name is Ken Nolley and I am writing on behalf of Oregon Voices in regard to HB 2360. Because of family health issues, I was unable to get testimony to the hearing that the House Judiciary held on this bill; I am, therefore, copying the leadership of that committee in on this testimony.

I believe that the change of phrasing the bill proposes makes sense, especially because the problem of homelessness is so widespread among people who are on the registry. Jeff Clabaugh tells us that his office cannot track about 20% of the persons who are on the current registry. Although it is surmised that some of those missing people have moved out of state or in some cases may have died, it is assumed that some, if not many, of the rest may be homeless. This bill offers a step toward addressing that problem which we support. We do, however, have concerns about the practical realities of requiring reregistration in the usual way within 10 days of every move with this population—concerns that we first voiced in 2015 in regard to a bill that arose out of similar concerns about homeless people on the registry.

The two biggest problems people on the registry initially face are finding a job and finding housing. We have experience with these problems among the families of Oregon Voices, and because we try to support other families and individuals in their efforts to reconstruct responsible, stable lives, we have seen the experiences of many more. Everyone one in re-entry faces these problems, of course, but they are worse for people on the registry than for any other population. Every professional dealing with the sex offender population that I have met acknowledges this to be true. Homelessness among sex offenders is a widespread problem and an ongoing worry—for the former offenders, for their families, and should be for the society as a whole.

I want to stress that in the overwhelming majority of cases, this homelessness does not arise from people attempting to avoid registration requirements. Indeed the cause of homelessness for nearly all homeless people on the registry is that no matter how hard they try and no matter where they look, they cannot find stable housing. The problem is compounded in no small measure by the shortage of housing stock in a state experiencing significant population growth. I see it repeatedly in my work in the

Salem area. When the number of people looking for housing so far outstrips the number of available units, people on the registry are frozen out of the market.

We need to understand the 10 day reporting requirement in the bill in this context. It may seem to be a minor inconvenience to those of us with stable, orderly lives. But for persons who cannot find a stable and safe place to sleep, who lack means of transportation, and in the worst of cases, even a calendar, reporting every time their sleeping place changes becomes a major challenge. One might ask, why should society care about those problems? After all, these people got themselves into this mess.

The answer is readily at hand. Other states have discovered that when restrictions and requirements on registrants become too difficult to manage, more of them disappear under the radar. Unless we try to adjust the usual reporting process to this population, there seems to be a strong possibility that the bill will fail to produce the results intended.

I urge the committee, therefore, to follow this bill up with several actions:

- Start by setting up a workgroup of people who deal regularly with this population to find workable ways to streamline reporting changes for the most unstable part of this population—perhaps by telephone, although there may be other ways.
- As the BPPPS scoring and risk-level classification process goes forward on the implementation of the new system, reporting requirements should be adjusted to take into account the risk-based levels assigned to each individual. These reporting requirements might be eliminated or relaxed significantly at least for level one individuals.
- Finally, if we are really serious about trying to eliminate the social problem of difficult to track homeless sex offenders, we should follow up by insuring that people on the registry have access to re-entry programs that can lead to jobs and stable housing, the lack of which are the cause of most of the homelessness in the population in the first place. We all have a stake in not having sex offenders re-offend, and thus we all have an interest in their success in achieving stability.

We support HB 2360, believing it to be a small step in a constructive direction. But if we do not follow it up by addressing some of the issues I have mentioned here, I think that there is a significant chance that HB 2360 will not alleviate the problem it sets out to address. It could even make it worse.

Ken Nolley
Oregon Voices