

TO: House Committee on Rules
FR: Dick Withnell, Oregon Business Council
DA: May 25, 2017
RE: Support for HB 3078, The Safety and Savings Act

Chair Williamson and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dick Withnell with the Oregon Business Council, and I'm testifying in support of The Safety and Savings Act (HB 3078).

Oregon is on the brink of opening another women's prison while female prison population rates continue to skyrocket. The vast majority of these women have been convicted of addiction-driven crimes. They have histories of trauma or mental health issues that need to be addressed through treatment, not incarceration. Additionally, 75% of women in prison are mothers, which means children throughout the state are separated from their primary caregiver.

HB 3078, is a targeted approach with mechanisms to address the overpopulation of the women's prison now and limited sentencing reforms that will become operative in 2018 to curb taxpayer spending on more and more state prisons. Housing people in prison for drug and property crimes for excessively long times sucks away our ability to invest in areas we know will keep people out of prison and our communities safe.

Our state is in a \$1.7 billion deficit, and opening a new women's prison would cost an additional \$17.5 million every biennium at a time when we face cuts to drug and alcohol treatment programs, mental health services, victims' services, and supports for working families and families trying to find work. Passing HB 3078 will ensure that we do not have to open a new women's prison this session, or for the next 10 years, with fiscal savings of \$20 million this session and more in future sessions.

This Act will provide cost-savings, community-based services, addiction treatment, and increased family stability. Savings from this measure should be reinvested into local communities through Justice Reinvestment and victims services. Investments in JRI reduce future costs to the state and are necessary to keep communities safe. The Safety and Savings Act contains multiple elements, and we believe that all of them are essential.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. Again, I ask your support for The Safety and Savings Act (HB 3078), and I urge the Committee to move this bill forward.

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