



June 5, 2017

Oregon Legislative Assembly's Senate Committee on Judiciary:

Members of the Oregon Legislative Assembly's Senate Committee on Judiciary, my name is Jonny Gersten and I am a law student at Lewis and Clark Law School in Portland. I am writing to express my support for SB-360 as a student, Oregon citizen, and member of the Lewis and Clark Criminal Justice Reform Clinic (CJRC).

The CJRC is partially housed within the Community Law Division of the Portland Metropolitan Public Defender's Office. The CJRC's partnership with the Community Law Division allows students to work with attorneys to represent individuals seeking to remove barriers to their re-entry. Within the clinic, I am working with a team to develop a comprehensive Reentry Guide for Oregon. When complete, this guide will include information and "how to" directions covering approximately nine areas of law and civic life: Housing, Employment, Parole & Probation, Education, Cleaning Up Your Criminal Record, ID & Voting, Family & Children, Public Benefits, and Court-ordered Debt. It will be published in hard copy and on an interactive website.

For many clients, the largest systematic barrier to successful re-entry is lack of money. While delinquent fees and debts may be minor relative to the challenges of paying rent, obtaining food, and meeting other basic needs, they aggregate and impose a substantial burden for individuals seeking to reintegrate into society; and understandably, they may not be a priority. Yet, they hinder clients' ability to overcome barriers such as expunging their criminal records and obtaining a driver's license.

SB-360 provides a tangible opportunity for the state to demonstrate its genuine desire to improve the lives of Oregonians as they seek to reenter society. With the passage of the bill, many of our clients could eliminate an additional financial burden while supplementing their reintegration process through meaningful community involvement.

With bills like this, I am proud to be part of a community working to diminish reentry barriers and move toward a more inclusive state.

On behalf of myself, the Lewis and Clark Criminal Justice Reform Clinic, and the Metropolitan Public Defender Office,

Jonny Gersten, Maxwell Evans, and Stacie Damazo
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