



# Legislative Testimony

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

February 8, 2017

The Honorable Jeff Barker, Chair  
House Committee on Judiciary

## **RE: House Bill 2253**

Chair Barker and members of the House Judiciary Committee, I am Ken Jeske, Administrator of Oregon Corrections Enterprises (OCE). OCE is a semi-independent state agency that operates inmate work and training programs at Oregon Department of Corrections prisons. I am here to testify in support of HB 2253 and answer any questions.

### **What the Bill Does:**

HB 2253 provides that a Department of Corrections inmate may perform electrical or plumbing work if supervised by a licensed electrician or plumber who is an OCE employee.

### **Background Information:**

In 2013, Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 421.423 was amended by House Bill (HB) 3245, which set the provision that an inmate in custody of the Department of Corrections (DOC) may not perform electrical or plumbing work unless under the direct supervision of a regular status DOC employee who is a licensed electrician or plumber.

As introduced, HB 3245 required both DOC and OCE to ensure licensed or experienced trade or occupation corrections employees supervise inmates participating as an apprentice or journey worker in apprenticeship programs. OCE was removed during the revisions, for reasons that remain unclear.

OCE operates inmate work programs in which heavy equipment and machinery is used and often requires maintenance and repairs by electricians or plumbers. Under current statute, inmates cannot perform any electrical or plumbing work on OCE machinery or equipment unless supervised by a DOC employee who is licensed.

This concept is needed to allow OCE employees who are licensed electricians and plumbers to supervise inmates while working in OCE work areas. OCE staff often perform electrical work in OCE work program areas. Continuing to have DOC employees directly supervising inmates doing this work increases costs for OCE, sometimes resulting in overtime, and it does not allow inmates assigned to OCE to perform the work to help maintain their professional licenses costs.

**Issues Addressed by the Bill:**

If passed, this legislation would allow DOC inmates to perform electrical or plumbing work under the direct supervision of an OCE employee who is a licensed electrician or plumber. This will result in lower costs for OCE and may increase the number of inmates participating in apprenticeship programs.

**Requested Action:**

For the reasons explained above, on behalf of the Department of Corrections and OCE, I ask this committee to vote HB 2253 out of committee with a do pass recommendation.

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

*Submitted by:*

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