



# Legislative Testimony

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

**February 6, 2018**

The Honorable Paul Evans, Chair  
House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

**RE: House Bill 4038**

Chair Evans and members of the committee, I am Cindy Booth, Re-Entry and Release Administrator with the Offender Management and Rehabilitation Division (OMR) for the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC). I am here to testify in support of section five of HB 4038 and answer any questions.

## **What the Bill Does:**

Section five of the bill establishes an Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs (ODVA) outreach program to provide services to incarcerated veterans. This program will assist veterans and their spouses and dependents, both during incarceration and post-release, to apply for or obtain reinstatement of federal and state veterans benefits and other benefits, services, and resources for which they may be eligible.

This section also authorizes ODVA and DOC to appoint one or more veterans service officers (VSOs) to carry out the program requirements. These VSOs will be certified, as required by Oregon law, to ensure they have the training, education, and skills required to assist incarcerated veterans and spouses and dependents of incarcerated veterans in applying for all federal and state veterans benefits and aid for which they may be entitled.

Specifically, these positions will serve as representatives and advocates for incarcerated veterans in case preparation, case management, handling of administrative hearings, and appeals of any denial of veterans benefits or aid. They will also work with the veteran, their support system, DOC, and community corrections staff to identify and secure veteran-related re-entry resources and services to improve the success of the veteran's prison-to-community transition.

## **Background Information:**

In 2015, the Oregon Legislature passed HB 2838 to establish the Incarcerated Veterans Task Force. This multi-disciplinary task force was convened to research, study, and make recommendations to the legislature regarding outreach, information sharing, and assistance to incarcerated veterans with respect to their earned federal and state veterans benefits and other available services and resources.

Included with this testimony are copies of the Executive Summary of the task force's final report presented to the Legislature in September 2016. The summary highlights the collaboration of Oregon legislators, state agencies, and the federal Veterans Administration to address the pressing and unique needs of the men and women who have served our country and are now serving a criminal sentence. The full report is available through this link:

<http://www.oregon.gov/odva/Connect/Documents/FinancialReports/2016%20Task%20Force%20on%20Incarcerated%20Veterans.pdf>

**Requested Action:**

The Oregon Department of Corrections respectfully requests this committee's support of HB 4038 and the collaborative "Re-Entry Benefits Program" this legislation authorizes.

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

*Submitted by:*

Oregon Department of Corrections

Name: Cindy Booth, Re-Entry and Release Administrator, Offender Management and Rehabilitation

Email: [Cindy.D.Booth@doc.state.or.us](mailto:Cindy.D.Booth@doc.state.or.us)

Phone: 503-428-0079

Attachment