

Testimony in support of HB 2631  
House Committee on Judiciary  
Submitted by Jacqueline Jaye Ford  
February 15, 2019

Dear Chair Williamson, Co-Chairs Gorsek and Sprenger, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in strong support of HB 2631.

My name is Jackie, I'm 64 years old and currently retired. I have held a wide variety of jobs in my life but the majority of my employment was spent as a server in the restaurant/bar business through my 40's and then I entered into the home health care field. I was twice formerly incarcerated, once in Oregon and once in Colorado.

HB 2631 would be an extremely invaluable resource to women. Most women entering Coffee Creek Correctional Facility have no money to hire a lawyer for their criminal defense, let alone for help with issues involving child support/ custody, bank account, settling their housing leases, utilities, DMV issues, and the myriad of non-criminal issues that were abruptly abandoned when arrested. Their friends and family are usually unable to adequately address these issues and even if they knew how to do it, they are told they are not authorized to do so.

I feel so strongly about this because I have experienced not having legal services for non-criminal matters when released from prison the first time in Oregon, and ended up going back to prison. I couldn't rent an apartment, I was denied utilities, I was denied access to my children, eventually lost custody, and ultimately lost hope. I felt completely overwhelmed and collapsed under the weight of expectation. I was so frustrated I gave up.

It's very hard for most of these women to reenter society after being released from prison, and with the added obstacles of broken leases, unpaid utility's and collections, etc., is such an added burden that is truly overwhelming. This added stress can be the difference between successfully reentering society or failing and recidivism. Please make HB 2631 a reality and give these women the best chance possible to becoming a productive member of society. This not only helps these women; it enhances the women's entire community. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

*Jacqueline Ford*

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