



Testimony in support of HB 2631
House Committee on Judiciary
Submitted by Paul Solomon, Executive Director
February 18, 2019

Board of Directors

Steve Christiansen, *Chair*
Steve Hecker, *Vice Chair*
Jason Pellegrini, *Treasurer*
Zoe York, *Secretary*
Brian Cox
Chris Elliott
Margaret Hallock
Tricia Hedin
Trina Kanewa
Sen. James Manning
Kevin Moore
Guadalupe Quinn
Hon. Ilisa Rooke-Ley
Peter Shannon
Darren Stone
Richie Weinman

Staff

Paul Solomon
Executive Director
Nick Crapser
Deputy Director
Laura Johnson
Director of Program Development

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

My name is Paul Solomon and I am the Executive Director at Sponsors, Inc, based in Eugene. I am also the Chair of Lane County's Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC); and serve on the Governor's Reentry Council in addition to many other boards related to public safety.

I am writing today to express my support for HB 2631, which will help Oregon women who are incarcerated successfully reintegrate into our communities.

Sponsors, Inc., is a national leader in the delivery of Reentry services. We operate 20 buildings on seven sites in Lane County with over 200 units of housing for men and women with criminal histories and ancillary programs. We also offer a broad range of services—parenting classes, mental health counseling, cognitive-based Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) and a Mentorship program—that women need to be successful upon returning to their community. We do this because we believe that people can and do change, and that interventions at the appropriate time can serve as a catalyst to lasting change.

Every day women are released with formidable legal barriers including but not limited to municipal court warrants, outstanding fines and fees, child support arrears, and other issues that often could be addressed prior to release with the benefit of the supports included in HB 2631. We know that these issues can often snowball upon release and create major barriers to reentry and ultimately a person's ability to achieve self-sufficiency.

Over the past twenty years, the incarceration rate of women in Oregon has tripled. In 2017, Oregon was on the verge of opening another women's prison largely due to excessive sentences for drug and property crimes which disproportionately impact women and people of color. Oregon was able to avoid opening that additional prison through reforms made in House Bill 3078. With that bill Oregon took a big step forward in ensuring that fewer women are finding their way into prison – Oregon

Services for People with Criminal Histories Since 1973

Phone: (541) 485-8341 Address: 338 Highway 99 North, Eugene, OR 97402 Fax: (541) 683-6196

Tax ID# 93-0639815

now has the opportunity to ensure that women who are currently in prison have access to the resources and services they need in order to offer a more successful transition back into their communities. The civil legal services that will be provided through HB 2631 will remove yet one more barrier women face for successful re-entry to their communities.

I hope you'll join Sponsors, Inc. in your support for HB 2631.

Sincerely,



Paul Solomon, Executive Director