

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of Senate Judiciary Committee:

I am a parent and native Oregonian. As a former social worker and now as an attorney, I have spent a lot of time working closely with children the social service and juvenile justice systems. I know that in a functioning society, we should be held accountable for our actions. I also know that children have a special place in society and we have a duty to support them and their unique capacity for change. The children I have worked with want to be productive members of society, to repair harm they have caused, and to live good lives. I know they have the capacity to do these things.

SB 1008 gives children the opportunity for a “second look” halfway through their sentences. This is important because many children are ready to reenter society and we are wasting critical time in their lives and our resources by keeping them incarcerated. Children also do better when they are integrated into the community with family and support. Our resources should be spent repairing them and supporting the community in doing so. Perhaps most importantly, children do better when they have incentives to try harder and prove to themselves and the community that they can do it. These incentives and positive reinforcement are critical for youth.

As an Oregonian, a parent, and someone who has worked with and cared deeply about children, I am certain we can treat ours better. SB 1008 would allow us to recognize their special place in society and give us greater opportunities to support and encourage them to be healthy members of our communities.

Thank you for your time. I hope you will support this bill.

Warmly,

Kimberly Mason
Portland, Oregon