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Oregon Senate Committee on Judiciary  
Salem, OR

Dear Senator Floyd Prozanski and members of the committee:

As a citizen, wife of a man who was convicted of Murder as a 15 year old, a youth justice and foster care service employee, and former foster youth I support the efforts of the Judiciary to reform juvenile justice laws and further the rehabilitative efforts of our youth and the men and women incarcerated that were youth at the time of their crimes. I work in an organization that provides Behavioral Rehabilitative Service (BRS) Proctor Homes to youth involved with DHS, OYA and sometimes with ODOC based on their age.

### **SB 1008 Support Statement**

During the early periods of Measure 11 46% of youth were given harsher sentences than their adult counterparts compared at 32.6% of adults with the same crimes. During this period youth were also remanded to actual prison and not to the custody of OYA. We took children and placed them in an adult environment and told them to survive without the knowledge of adulthood, prison or access to rehabilitative services.

Oregon DOC does not allow participation in education or vocational training for people in DOC that helps them to develop into contributing members of society unless the person has 5 years or less on their sentences. In rare circumstances there have been options for DOC inmates to participate in activities, once they have a date. However, the Oregon Board of Parole and Post Prison Supervision also require that people have participated in vocational and rehabilitative programs.

In 2016 Multnomah County adopted a new mandatory minimum sentencing policy for juveniles that allow youth to be looked at on a case-by-case basis and is in line with Miller v. Alabama (2012 USSC). This was not something available to the earlier convicted youth.

While I understand that youth convicted of murder are not the youth that this Second Look affects, I think it is important to consider the culpability of all youth, not limited to specific crimes that are considered BM11 crimes.

### **Personal Impact**

I have been friends with, and now married to, a man who was convicted at 15 years old of Murder for over 25 years. He was the youngest and the most impressionable of the group and was given a loaded gun by the adults involved. He came from a broken home with no active father and a mother that was

heavily ridden with depression and addicted to working to the point of her children (my husband and his siblings) being taken from the home when he was under the age of 10. He found himself homeless at the age of 11.

My husband was placed in foster and group homes over a series of years where he became acquainted with several members of a blood gang here in Portland. He found family, support and encouragement with this group of young men and finally felt like he belonged to something. Of course as adults we now realize the path that takes youth and what that does to families.

Now my husband is a part of developing trainings for outside organizations to help BRS Proctor Families be effective foster parents and help with recidivism. This training focuses on the child and helps foster parents understand their place in helping these at-risk youth feel a part of a healthy and welcoming environment which in turn will help kids turn away from gangs and unhealthy friendships in the community.

He mentors men coming into the DOC from OYA or the community and helps them adjust to their environment and directs them to positive avenues like employment, getting involved in the cultural or sentence-based clubs and groups. Within these clubs/groups he has began coordinating and assisting in the coordination of fundraisers, training opportunities and youth panel events where he can continue his community work.

My husband and many men like him have dedicated their lives, inside of prison, to assisting in breaking down the barriers to our youth's success and reduce recidivism. Some of these men have proposed major medical, social and financial programs that have been

On the opposite side of all of the positives, he has had a bumpy road through his incarceration. He has made bad decisions and not chosen the best path in his early incarceration. He was 15, handed a sentence of Life and transferred, at the age of 18, to Oregon DOC. He was immediately immersed into the same environment he had left on the streets and without opportunity for rehabilitative programs until he sees the board in 2022; without a real promise of release at that time either. It wasn't until he was older and had matured more, between ages 25 and 27, that he admittedly understood that he was eventually going to be in a position to see the board and that his decisions and seeking to find services for himself was imperative.

## **Conclusion**

I believe that SB 1008 should be a Yes vote and made retroactive to give all youth affected since Measure 11 was enacted a fair chance.

We have to look at this with the same lens as Miller v. Alabama if we want to be equitable and trauma informed. We have to stop putting youth in positions to not succeed and then wonder why they aren't taking each opportunity for success.