

Date: 27 March, 2019

Re: Support HB 2657

Dear Chair Williamson, Vice Chairs Gorsek and Sprenger and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Jess McGough, and I work with Clackamas Women's Services as a Violence Prevention Educator within Clackamas County. In support of HB 2657, I wanted to share my perspective on Oregon's youth and their education when they are involved in the criminal justice system.

Today, I write to you about a previous job. Right out of college, I began a 3 year career at a group home in Southeast Portland. The clients at the home were male adolescents, age ranging from 16 to 20 years old, who had been adjudicated. The youth I worked with had been charged with Sex Offenses and needed to register as Sex Offenders, working toward the possibility of having Relief of Registration. They came from every corner in the state, and most commonly from rural areas.

The young men that came through were brilliant, diverse, determined; they came to the program motivated to re-engage in their community. They attended school on weekdays, completed their chores, became employed in their first jobs. They refused to go to sleep at bedtime and they groaned every morning when it was time to wake up. On paper, they had the average teenage life.

Except most of these youth served months-long to years-long sentences in Detention and Correction Centers. Most were working to develop age-appropriate skills and abilities that had been moderately to severely stunted due to their time away from society and from a stable support network. Their extensive teams of Case Managers, Counselors, Life Skills Trainers, and Youth Advocates worked to coach the youth on developing skills such as proper personal hygiene, peer interactions, emotional regulation, job interview practicing, routine development, and more. Many of the youth were committed to participating in society in a functional way, yet no parts of the criteria in their program, schools, or Parole Agreements included Violence Prevention Education.

Staff facilitated groups on Sexual Health and Sexual Education, we discussed why cat-calling is verbally violent and often a scary incident for the women involved, and we talked about ways to communicate respectfully. While these were important and valuable teaching moments, they were often informal, with only a portion of the youth present, and nowhere near the extensiveness of Violence Prevention Education. We did not have formal Violence Prevention Education that educates youth on bystander intervention, understanding consent, and the role that oppression plays in violence.

It has been found that 64% of students are less likely to commit sexual violence after participating in Violence Prevention Education. If this was a resource available and provided to all students across Oregon, then less youth would commit sexual violence and end up in the Juvenile Justice System and less children would be victimized. And for the youth that have already committed these crimes, we are currently permitting them to enter back into the community after sexually offending, without the requirement of participating in Violence Prevention Education. If Oregon decides to invest further into

Violence Prevention Education, we would be actively participating in the reduction of recidivism. I am in strong support HB 2657.

Sincerely,

Jess McGough