



Legislative Testimony

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

April 1, 2019

The Honorable Rob Wagner, Chair
Senate Committee on Education

Regarding: SB 777

Chair Wagner and members of the committee, I am Heidi Steward, Assistant Director of the Correctional Services Division for the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC). I am here to testify in support of the dash-four amendments to SB 777 and answer any questions.

What the Bill Does:

The dash-four amendments to SB 777 establish a taskforce on prison education. This taskforce is to report to interim committees of the Legislative Assembly by September 15, 2020.

The taskforce consists of 16 appointed members to include two members from the Senate and two members from the House of Representatives. The Governor will appoint members from the office of the Governor, Employment Department, Higher Education Coordinating Commission, community colleges, four-year colleges, Department of Corrections, Oregon businesses, Oregon Corrections Enterprises, building trades, formerly incarcerated persons, and one member with expertise in re-entry from prison to the community.

Background Information:

It is well documented that education and vocational training provided during incarceration significantly reduces the risk of recidivism. Current obstacles for increasing educational programming and vocational training in prisons include limited access to classroom, learning resources, and technology as well as lack of increased funding for contractor-provided services from the community colleges.

Issues Addressed by the Bill:

We are aware of the barriers to education and training in prison and welcome the chance to work collaboratively with others to find solutions and partnerships. By creating a taskforce this bill gives us that opportunity. We anticipate the taskforce will address options and opportunities for expanding, updating, and improving education and training. These efforts will not only improve public safety but also add capacity to Oregon's workforce and economy. Our foremost partner in this work is Oregon Corrections Enterprises (OCE). As an expert in vocational development and training in Oregon prisons, we believe OCE should have a place on the task force.

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Requested Action:

The department requests the Committee vote SB 777 with the dash-four amendments out of committee with a do-pass recommendation.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Submitted by:

Oregon Department of Corrections

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