



Legislative Testimony

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

April 1, 2019

The Honorable Rob Wagner, Chair
Senate Committee on Education

Regarding: SB 949

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 provide testimony on SB 949 and answer any questions.

What the Bill Does:

SB 949 appropriates funds to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) for purposes of prison education programs. These moneys are in addition to, and not in lieu of, any other General Fund appropriations to the HECC. They are to be distributed specifically to the University of Oregon (U of O), and Blue Mountain Community College (BMCC) for purposes of providing and expanding educational programs in Oregon correctional facilities.

As introduced, the U of O would receive \$350,000, and BMCC would receive \$150,000 for the biennium beginning July 1, 2019.

The bill does not specify what type of educational programs are to be provided, or whether the amount of Adult Basic Education (ABE) and General Educational Development (GED) courses currently being provided by BMCC through contracts with the DOC will be increased. We believe the intent is to add college-level courses.

Background Information:

Both the U of O and BMCC currently bring college students, typically from the colleges' respective campuses, inside correctional institutions to participate in college courses, for college credits, with individuals in our custody. These two programs currently operate separately from DOC's Education and Training Unit. The focus of DOC's Unit is to provide statutorily mandated ABE, GED and vocational training. BMCC and U of O's current college programs are provided on a voluntary basis with coordinating support from DOC for classroom space, scheduling, and access to the facility.

Issues Addressed by the Bill:

Education is a proven strategy to counter recidivism. This bill would provide funding to expand corrections education, thereby providing more individuals with additional opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills to support a successful return to their communities.

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

Submitted by:

Oregon Department of Corrections

Heidi Steward, Assistant Director for Correctional Services

Heidi.R.Steward@doc.state.or.us

Phone: (503) 945-9055