

**To the Joint Ways and Means Committee, Subcommittee on Public Safety
Co-Chairs Sen. Jackie Winters and Rep. Carla Piluso, and Members of the Committee:**

My name is Kate Oldfield. I live in Washington County. I am 36 years old, a mother, a graduate student in forensic psychology, and a drug and alcohol counselor at the Columbia River Correctional Institution. I am a survivor of domestic violence, Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome, and an opiate addiction that peaked at 60 to 70 prescription Vicodin a day. I am also a graduate of the Washington County Drug Court. **My doctors say I should be dead. Without the Oregon's treatment courts, I would be.**

Looking back now through the lens of the opioid crisis, I realize how fortunate I was to have the Washington County Drug Court team fighting for my life. Because of drug court, I can now help other people going through treatment court, reduce recidivism, and help reconnect families.

I started smoking pot at age 12. I was really bright, did well in school and got high scores on my SATs. I didn't think drugs were a problem. When I was 18, I met a man who was 29. I decided to move in with him rather than going to college because he had pot and he could buy me alcohol. When I was around 19, he started to physically abuse me. I was too embarrassed to go home to my family, so I stayed. Then I was offered cocaine at my job and I used it. It made me feel brave enough to go home to the man I lived with and face what was waiting for me. I started to get broken bones from the abuse and the doctor gave me prescription opiates for pain. I stopped using cocaine and pot, but I was still getting high. And I thought it was fine because my doctor gave it to me.

By the time I left the man I had been living with I was a full-blown opiate addict. I lost my job, I was doctor shopping, and I would go to different pharmacies to fill the prescriptions. Then I started making up names for the prescriptions. I thought, that's not a crime. But it was. I was arrested and charged with identity theft. I was sentenced to probation and outpatient treatment, but I wasn't ready to stop. I would stay clean for a while and then start using again. Eventually, I was facing 70 months in prison under Measure 57. They offered me drug court. I had a daughter. She was young. I didn't want to leave her. I didn't want to die. I needed help and I knew it. This was in 2010. I was 28.

When I was in the drug court program I didn't think I'd be capable of very much – because I had ruined my life so spectacularly. The work you do in treatment court is the hardest work of a lifetime. Having to deal with pain, shame and addiction, and be accountable is hard. The support I received helped me in finally overcoming my addiction. I found my purpose and my life through treatment court.

I have a client who has been in prison 11 times – at \$35,000 a year for over 20 years. What does drug court cost? Not that. Not including the financial effect on the community or the cost to victims of having to rebuild their lives. Up front the costs may be more, but the long-term savings are infinitely higher. You're saving lives and taking a burden off state programs like foster care – when you don't have to take kids away from parents who are addicted or in jail. The community is safer, there is less recidivism and that means there are fewer victims. **There's a powerful message here: No one is disposable, and no one is beyond hope. You can achieve all that by funding treatment courts. Thank you.**

Kate Oldfield - April 4, 2019

