

February 3, 2020

Good Afternoon,

My name is Katie Cook. My husband, Tom Rietmann, and I have been ranchers in Gilliam County for the past 28 years and we have raised our three children on the family farm. In addition, I taught English Language Arts at Condon High School for eight years and I am currently teaching a GED course to Spanish speaking immigrants in Odell, Oregon.

I am a member of the NORCOR Community Resource Coalition and I am urging you to vote in favor of HB 4121. We must not forget that we are a nation of immigrants.

Using NORCOR as a detainee center must stop. This is a regional jail and it is not designed to be a detainee center. We understand that jails and prisons are a necessary part of society and that some people have to be in them because they are a danger to others or themselves, but in most cases, detainees do not fall in to this category.

So why are we locking up people who might otherwise make positive contributions to our communities? As a society, I would hope that we are not locking people up just to make a budget work- we are better than this. We are interdependent in rural areas and depend on each other despite our differences and immigrants are a huge part of this equation.

When we lock up immigrants because of documentation issues, this may seem like it can be an effective deterrent, but in reality it is costly price to pay for our communities. It causes traumatic repercussions for our immigrant neighbors because it creates fear and suspicion that is unnecessary and damaging. Racial profiling becomes a huge issue.

As a high school teacher, I witnessed tensions in the classroom that I did not witness before. This is not healthy for our children, our families, our schools and our communities. As a resident of Gilliam County and the Columbia Gorge, I take this issue very seriously. I trust you will use your deepest discernment.

Thank you,

Katie Cook