



Oregon Voices
PO Box 13175
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August 10, 2020

TO: Joint Interim Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Public Safety

Testimony Addressing Budget Rebalance Proposal

Co-Chairs Sen. Courtney and Rep. Kotek, and members of the committee:

We are writing on behalf of Oregon Voices. OV advocates for policies that reduce crimes, that provide balanced, fair sentencing which holds offenders responsible while recognizing that people can change, that support the healing of survivors of crimes, the persons convicted of them, and their families and communities. Our focus is particularly upon the area of sex crimes, but our work brings us into contact with a much wider community of incarcerated persons, victims, and the families. All the work and the research we have done over the last decade has convinced us that we can and must do better in all of these areas. The widening recognition of the disparate impacts of current policies upon minority communities of color makes the need for change all that much more urgent and apparent.

Oregon has started on a better road by working to reduce the use of prison beds and to invest in the processes of reclamation and healing that make for healthy, intact communities. We believe that the current moment offers an opportunity to reaffirm changes that Oregon has already begun through the Justice Reinvestment Initiative.


The crisis of the Covid epidemic poses serious challenges for all of us, but it also clarifies some choices that we can make. Clearly our prisons are ill-equipped to defend against the invasion of the virus. We strongly support the use of commutations to reduce prison populations. The process extends principles central to justice reinvestment by reducing the number of persons at risk and reducing the density of populations in the prisons. We hope that the committee will support and encourage the beginning that DOC and the governor have begun in this area.

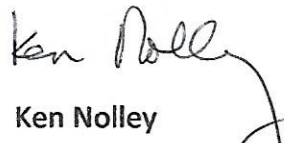
We also support the development of a thoughtful plan to close Shutter Creek Correctional Institution in North Bend in a way that recognizes and supports the Coos Bay area. Its location in a place remote from most of Oregon's population limits the family and community connections that support successful reentry. And because it is the smallest unit in the DOC

system, expanding the commutation process could both make up for the closure and still reduce populations elsewhere in the system over coming months.

Finally, we hope that taking steps now to build upon the Justice Reinvestment Initiative can be followed up with further work on sentencing reform in the 2021 session. All the research we have seen and the cumulative experience of working on the ground with justice reinvestment in the state and in Marion County underscores that there is a better way for Oregon to create safe and whole communities.

Respectfully,


Jan Nolley


Ken Nolley