

February 24, 2021

Senate Committee on the Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation
900 Court St NE – Room 453
Salem OR 97301

IN RE: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 207

Dear Committee Members:

Kindly accept this letter as my testimony in favor of Senate Bill 207 which would "... appropriate money from the General Fund to [the] Office of [the] Governor for [the] purpose of funding [the] office of [the] Corrections Ombudsman."

The currently long-dormant Ombudsman position and functions was a great and highly successful idea many years ago when it was first established. It is a shame that the Office has been left unfunded and inactive in recent years. The Oregon Department of Corrections has a long and dark history of taking advantage of adults in custody. There are essentially zero checks and accountabilities in place to prevent or correct deliberate abuses of power by Oregon Department of Corrections employees. The so-called Inmate Grievance System is a joke – an impenetrable, circular process of Department employees protecting and covering up for each other.

The Corrections Ombudsman Office is an essential and irreplaceable tool, which can, and must be, used to address and correct the blatant, systemic and acute misadventures by the Oregon Department of Corrections' employees. The tiny amount of money allocated to the Office will, in the long run, create a generous cost savings in State liability and expenses which would otherwise be assigned as a part of litigation settlements. The Oregon Department of Corrections has long been operating in a "penny-wise and pound-foolish" mode; it is time to reign in the Department's abusive mentality. The Corrections Ombudsman will do exactly that. In reporting to the Governor directly, the Ombudsman will be able to be entirely neutral and objective in his or her assessments and conclusions.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my testimony to the Committee.

Sincerely,



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