
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon

March 9, 2021

Chair Bynum, Vice-Chairs Noble and Power, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon urges strong support for HB 3035 and its -1 amendments, which establishes a pilot program at the Coffee Creek Penitentiary to ensure adults in custody have comprehensive access to healthcare. We stand with our reproductive justice partners who have long proclaimed that the fight for justice and equity does not end with having the right to make reproductive and sexual health decisions. That fight must include advocating for people to have the power and resources necessary to support themselves and raise their families in safe environments and healthy communities, with equitable access to justice, education, and opportunity.

The number of women imprisoned in the Oregon Department of Corrections has nearly tripled over the past 20 years despite the fact that women are not committing more frequent or serious crimes.¹ One driver of these increased rates of incarceration is changes in sentencing laws, related to certain drug and property crimes, which have disproportionately impacted women of color.² A larger proportion of justice-involved women have experienced sexual abuse and/or other forms of victimization, family violence, unhealthy relationships, unsafe housing, and are of low socioeconomic status.³

Justice-involved people are often medically underserved and may have compounding or co-existing health needs.⁴ The in-take process for a person entering custody is a public health opportunity to provide quality care to people that have faced the greatest barriers to accessing appropriate medical attention. HB 3035 is an important first step towards combating pre-existing and systemic health inequities due to race and economic disparities in our state.

There are stark physical, mental, and substance use health disparities for adults in custody. Nationwide, adults in custody have higher rates of hepatitis C and Tuberculosis and are three times more likely to have HIV or AIDS. Many adults in custody who have mental health care needs are not consistently provided pharmacotherapy and other forms of treatment. Only 11% of adults in custody diagnosed with substance abuse disorder receive treatment for it. Nationwide, only 54% of those pregnant upon admission in a state prison reported receiving any type of pregnancy care.⁵

According to a study by the Oregon Department of Corrections, 50% of individuals surveyed at Coffee Creek Penitentiary reported that they needed physical healthcare while incarcerated, but out of those, only 40% received care. Our current corrections systems often deny basic rights such as access to quality reproductive and maternal health care,⁶ as well as regular family contact and support. Black, Indigenous, and other people of color are often the most impacted, as these communities often face disproportionately long sentences.

House Bill 3035 and the -1 amendments recognize the current and compounding health needs and disparities faced by women in Coffee Creek. This bill would ensure adults in custody at Coffee Creek Penitentiary have comprehensive access to physical healthcare; the whole spectrum of sexual health and reproductive healthcare; peripartum care (inclusive of prenatal, postnatal and the ability to breastfeed their newborns); gender-affirming healthcare; mental healthcare; and substance use disorder care and support.

¹ <https://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/news/crime/2017/02/16/oregon-faces-skyrocketing-female-prison-population/98012786/>

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Oregon Justice Resource Center, "Women in Prison in Oregon" (September 2016)

⁵ <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2019/12/05/pregnancy/>

⁶ <https://www.naacp.org/criminal-justice-fact-sheet/>

The bill would further ensure that trusted, trained, and qualified health care navigators are available and able to help people who are incarcerated navigate the system to make sure their healthcare needs are addressed. Additionally, the bill would add transparency and monitor public health outcomes, such as life expectancy, obesity, vaccination rates, STD infections, poor pregnancy outcomes, and infant mortality rates. HB 3035 also requires the Coffee Creek Penitentiary to create accessible electronic medical records for adults in custody to allow for easier ongoing care coordination, both upon intake and at release.

For these reasons, Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon urges the committee's support of HB 3035.

Sincerely,

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Interim Executive Director
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon