



March 24, 2021

The Honorable Janelle Bynum, Chair  
The Honorable Ron Noble, Vice-Chair  
The Honorable Karin Power, Vice-Chair  
House Committee on Judiciary

**Re: Supporting HB 2825 – Treating survivors of domestic abuse with more dignity and fairness.**

Dear Chair Bynum and Members of the Committee,

Red Lodge Transition Services supports the passage of House Bill 2825 (Rep. Williams). HB 2825 will allow for more just sentencing for criminal defendants who are survivors of domestic violence and for whom that abuse was a contributing factor in the commission of the crime.

Our organization is committed to reducing and preventing incarceration among Native American women. Over the last 35 years, the incarceration of women has increased over 800%, and violence against women (physical, emotional, financial, sexual) plays a role in these skyrocketing statistics. Native Americans are incarcerated at a rate 38% higher than the national average. Native Americans experience violence at a rate over two times the national average.

Over 80% of the women we work with at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility, regional jails, treatment centers and community, state they are survivors of domestic violence. The rate of violent victimization among American Indian women was more than double that among all women according to Department of Justice research reports. Violence is an epidemic which spills over into our families and communities and perpetuates social, cultural and historical trauma.

As Native people we believe all life is sacred, and in many Native American tribes, the culture is matrilineal. Traditionally violence against women and children was almost nonexistent. Prisons did not exist. We practiced restorative justice rather than punitive punishment and it worked well for us! Imagine going to prison because of your significant other's influence or actions. It happens all the time... The victim becomes the victim, over and over. Imagine the psychological damage of growing up in an abusive home that 'normalizes' substance abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse and poverty.

Women are the backbone of our nation, and our job is to help women suffering from domestic violence regain their self-worth while they work through their trauma. Punishment is not the answer to healing the sacred hoop.

Experiencing violence creates a well-worn path to incarceration. If Oregon wants to reduce and prevent incarceration, we need to address the social ills that create that path to prison. Substance Use Disorders, mental health, childhood trauma, poverty, violence, and dysfunctional family dynamics almost always play a role in the lives of people filling our jails and prisons. For years we have been on a trajectory of collapse with our prison spending. How do we do this differently? It is time to create new paradigms, correcting our social ills and making Oregon a safe place for all our citizens.

Red Lodge Transition Services urges you to vote yes on HB 2825.

Sincerely,

Trish Jordan, Executive Director