

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,

My name is Crystal Magaña. Thank you for this opportunity to tell my story and testify in support of HB 2825.

My daughter was not even 2 years old when I began my incarceration of 16.5 years. If this bill was around when my crime had happened, things could have looked a lot differently. I say that because when I was 14 years old, I was forced into prostitution by the man who was also the father of my daughter. I got pregnant and give birth at the age of 17. Bouncing around from hotel room to hotel room and praying every day that I was going to breathe another breath in my life.

When my crime occurred, the criminal system didn't consider that I was living in domestic violence and I was forced into prostitution. I was a young girl who was living on the streets and I had Battered Women's Syndrome. I was convicted and sentenced under Measure 11. So, when my judge came time to sentence me, even after speaking with the district attorneys and my attorneys, she said that she had no choice other than to send me prison for 16.5 years.

When I arrived at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility, because of the length of my time and because I had no drug or alcohol addictions, there were no opportunities for me to gain any help for the reasons that brought me to prison. There are no classes or programs available for women like me to deal with and process those types of traumas. I was left on my own.

Because of the length of my sentence, the DHS system decided that my daughter would be better off not knowing me. They immediately placed a no-contact order. Every day I wrote letters and sent them to her DHS workers anyways, because once you're a mother, you're always a mother and you love your kids, and you want to be there for them. And my worst fear was that something like this was going to happen to my daughter.

If HB 2825 passes, then people like me don't have to go to prison for 17 years of their lives. They would be getting help. The system could consider the situation of the crime, see the problem, and sentence people in a way that acknowledges the trauma, the domestic violence, and the healing that is needed. Now, people are mandated to prison sentences that create more trauma for the person and their kids. When my daughter was old enough, she went to the judge and said, "I want to know who my mama is, I want to see her."

Many of us do have kids. If this bill passes, then we don't have to sit in prison for years and years with broken relationships with our families. Families would have a better opportunity to live healthy lives.

Once I got to minimum custody, after over 12 years of incarceration, I worked to find the supports that I needed through programs like, Family Preservation Project, Red Lodge, and the Oregon Women in Trades Program. But many women in prison are not able to get the supports that they need to find their voice and to be encouraged that they can make it outside the prison walls, that prison isn't the end for them.

Today I have been out of prison for 4.5 years. I am a mother to a 22-year-old young woman, and we are still in a continuous process of healing our relationship. I'm a proud Iron Worker and I am part of my union, Local 29. I do whatever I can to advocate and to encourage women to get help and to gain back authority over their lives on whatever level that means.

Survivors of domestic violence, their children, their families, and our community needs HB 2825 and more bills like it.

I urge you to **support** HB 2825.

Sincerely,

Crystal Magaña