

**Testimony, Taylor C.**  
**SB 819**  
**March 31, 2021**

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the committee – thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 819.

My name is Taylor and I was arrested on January 3, 2018 when I was 15 years old. However, my story begins much before that day and I would like to share it with you now.

I had a pretty rough upbringing. When I was two years old, I was found by police officers in a methamphetamine production house with my mother. The next nine years were a roller coaster, like life often is. I had a few positive things going for me like a large, supportive family and a father who was dedicated to raising me. I also excelled academically and had many activities that I enjoyed. But, when I was 11 years old, my support system started crumbling beneath me, leaving me to feel extremely unwanted and left behind. It was easy to act out since I no longer had the adult supervision that children require. By the time I was 12, I was smoking my dad's marijuana stash that was constantly available in the house, and drinking alcohol. I was often arrested and placed in the juvenile system for crimes such as a Minor in Possession of Alcohol and Possession of Marijuana. On New Year's Eve 2017, I had been drinking and approached a man outside a convenience store. I punched this man with a keychain in my hand so that I could take his recently purchased six-pack of beer. Ultimately, I dropped the six-pack and ran. Fortunately, my victim was not hurt aside from a small cut on his nose, and he did not need to receive medical treatment.

However, these actions caught up with me and in March 2018, when I was just 15 years old, I accepted a sentence to 60 months of incarceration in the Oregon Youth Authority. I accepted that I was an outcast, that I was unwanted, and that my mistakes were a part of my identity. However, over the past three years at MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility, I have been able to take a step back, reassess these negative thoughts and actions, and see that I am more than my past.

Instead of investing energy to my vices, I have put that same energy into my education. I was proudly the valedictorian of Lord High School in 2020 while simultaneously being enrolled in 18 credits at Chemeketa Community College where I earned a 4.0 GPA. I have graduated programs such as Substance Abuse Treatment and have mentored other youth at MacLaren. Unfortunately, even though I have made so much progress and have learned my lessons, I still have about ten months left of my sentence. I am here today as an example of someone who would have really benefitted from a law like SB 819.

Even though no one got hurt, besides a small little cut, the DA chose to charge me with a Measure 11 offense that was unfairly long compared to the crime. While I acknowledge that I was drinking that night in 2017 and that a crime *was* committed, my sentence is extremely excessive.

I was informed last week that the Governor will be granting me a commutation but I should not have to only rely on the clemency process for an early release; a DA should be able to re-evaluate my case. I have done really well at MacLaren but because of my significant Measure 11 sentence, I am not left with many options. My case would be an ideal example of one where the District Attorney of the county where my case occurred could re-examine my sentence and holistically take into account all the details of the crime and the time I have spent incarcerated. If a law like this existed, I could potentially have an avenue to be released early without going through the clemency process. In addition to people who were wrongfully convicted, the ideal candidate for SB 819 is someone who had a very long sentence, who has worked hard to reform and rehabilitate, who is remorseful, and works every day to better themselves. I know that I am an entirely different person than the one who was convicted 3 years ago.

I am one of many youth in this state that struggled through serious issues in silence and without the support I needed growing up. While I cannot go back in time to prevent my mistakes, I have consciously chosen to turn my life around and can hopefully help prevent other kids from the same dark path. Today, I am not just speaking for myself but for everyone else who has been lost in the system without guidance, support, love, and hope. I am extremely thankful to have a team of family, friends, and mentors who back me up and I want to pass that along.

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and members of the committee - I urge you to pass SB 819. Thank you for your time.