

Dear Oregon Legislators,

I am writing in support of passing SB 191. In order to reduce recidivism and encourage individuals to rehabilitate and become more successful and productive members of society, they should be incentivized. Offering additional programs to inmates that allow for them to choose a different path and set them up for success once released, is essential to a safe community. Providing programs and education to an inmate but then keeping them behind bars for years to complete the remainder of their sentences is counterproductive. By the time they are released they will have forgotten the education that they had received and may have fallen back into the criminal mindset that they entered with after being subjected to inmates who did not have the forethought to complete a program in hopes of changing their lives for the better. I do not believe that any inmate is offered enough incentives or opportunities to rehabilitate, however those convicted of Measure 11 crimes are not provided any at all. Those who have completed programs to better their lives, earn their GED, and even a degree in a vocation are often left with years of their sentence to complete after they earn their degree.

One such case is Winter Faulkner, a first-time offender, who is serving a 75-month sentence at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility. Although she maintains her innocence, upon arriving at Coffee Creek at 20 years old, she has shown extemporaneous behavior, she has earned her GED, successfully completed a cosmetology program and is taking her boards on April 5, 2021, the day of this public hearing on SB 191. Upon passing her boards she plans to continue her education and complete the Master program as well. She is well loved by inmates and staff alike and has taken advantage of every opportunity made available to her. If everything proceeds as planned, she will have completed her master's program by the end of the year. If SB 191 passes, she will be released this coming February 2022; only a couple of months after she graduates. If SB 191 does not pass, she will not be released until May 20, 2023, a full year and a half after her graduation. What good does this time serve? Would it not be more beneficial to society to allow for her release, reward her for her good behavior and the excellent choices that she has made since her incarceration and allow her to put those skills to use immediately?

Winter is only one of several inmates who has used her time in prison wisely and chose to make the best of her time while incarcerated. There are thousands more that would excel if given the opportunity. Measure 11 and its restriction upon an inmate to receive good time, strips the inmate of the hope that is required to persevere.

SB 191, would allow for the early release of thousands of inmates that deserve a second chance and should be allowed the opportunity to prove to themselves and society that they have grown, changed and learned from their mistakes.

Please vote yes on SB 191.

Shannon Gallatti, Lake Oswego, Oregon