



Legislative Testimony

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

May 11, 2021

The Honorable Floyd Prozanski, Chair
Senate Judiciary Committee and Senate Bill 110 Implementation

Re: House Bill 2936A

Chair Prozanski and members of the committee, I am Gail Levario, Assistant Director of Employee Services for the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC). I am here to provide information related to House Bill (HB) 2936A and answer any questions you may have.

HB 2936A stipulates the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) is required to verify, through a uniform background checklist and standardized personal history questionnaire, law enforcement units complete certain background elements for the hiring of public safety officer applicants. DOC, identified as a law enforcement unit under Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 181A.355 and Sections 3 and 5 of the bill, employs Correctional Officers to maintain the safety and security of adults in custody (AICs) and the facilities which house them. Correctional Officers also fall under the statute's definition of a public safety officer as identified in Sections 3 and 5 of the bill.

Currently, all DOC Correctional Officers must pass, per DPSST administrative rule, a reading and writing test, a thorough background investigation, a medical exam, a vision test, and a drug test. HB 2936A adds the component of a psychological examination with a racial/bias assessment, information about the applicant's finances, and an interview with at least three of the applicant's references prior to employment. DOC follows the administrative rule regarding references, and the financial information component can be readily added to the background investigative report.

Since December of 2020, DOC has been in active discussions with a well-known public safety psychologist in the Portland area to establish an initiative to study the effectiveness of a pre-employment psychological screening assessment and secondary psychological evaluation prior to employing Correctional Officer candidates. This study, which will utilize written and verbal evaluations of candidates, is intended to create the first-of-its-kind corrections-specific psychological evaluation. Not only will this study conduct the initial screening of candidates – which assesses an individual's behavior, personality, cognitive abilities, and racial/bias tendencies – it will also follow the behavior of these employees through their first year of employment to help identify factors which may reduce staff attrition rates and predict attributes consistent with misconduct.

If this bill is enacted into law, it will impact DOC, and there will be a fiscal associated with it. The psychological assessment is a bifurcated process in which a pre-offer and post offer evaluation is utilized. Biennially, approximately 13,500 pre-offer evaluations and 350 post-offer evaluations will be administered to applicants for a total fiscal of approximately \$1.5M. There will also be a need for a full-time analyst position to evaluate the psychological reports and be a liaison to the medical facility performing the evaluation.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Submitted by:

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