



Oregon

Governor Kate Brown

Board of Parole and Post-Prison Supervision

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February 1, 2021

The Honorable Senator Michael Dembrow, Chair
Senate Education Committee, Members

Re: Testimony for SB 41

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thomsen, and Members of the Committee,

SB 41 corrects an oversight that significantly impacts the Board's ability to recruit and retain individuals who hold a Parole and Probation Officer certification to serve as a Board Member, Hearings Officer, or in other management positions. Many of the same skills utilized, and training received, by Parole and Probation Officers are highly relevant to the work conducted by Hearings Officers, Board Members, the Executive Director, and other positions within the Board.

The Board of Parole is a public safety agency that is the supervising authority for all individuals in Oregon on parole and post-prison supervision. Board Members, Hearings Officers, and staff have oversight and auditing authority over the sanctioning of individuals on supervision, setting the conditions of supervision for each individual released from the Department of Corrections, and conducting trainings on parole and post-prison supervision policy and best practices. The Board Hearings Officers conduct violation hearings for individuals on supervision, and the Board provides training to all Hearings Officers who are employed by community corrections.

Parole and Probation Officers in the State of Oregon must complete required training with the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) in order to earn a Basic Certification to serve as a Parole and Probation Officer. The basic training is 6 weeks of training at DPSST. New Parole and Probation Officers undergo extensive field training as well and submit proof of that training to earn their Basic Certification. The total course of training for a new officer often requires a year to complete and comes with substantial cost to community corrections agencies. Based on the law as it is currently written, when the Board of Parole recruits an individual with a Parole and Probation Officer certification to a position with the Board, their certification will expire five years from the date they stopped serving as a Parole and Probation Officer.

Upon their certification expiring, a Board employee who once held a certification from DPSST, would have to be re-enrolled in the basic training at DPSST, and complete the extensive field training, if that individual returned to a position in community corrections where certification was required. Due to this reality, the Board has historically had difficulty recruiting

qualified and interested individuals from the community corrections field for employment at our agency. Board Members generally have the opportunity to serve two four-year terms. However, Board Members recruited from community corrections who hold a certification face the difficult choice of leaving their Board Member position before five years and returning to community corrections to maintain their certification. The alternative is to remain at the Board and lose the certification they worked so hard to obtain.

Additionally, county community corrections agencies have Parole and Probation Officers serve as Hearings Officers to conduct violation hearings for individuals on parole and post-prison supervision. Those individuals would be ideal candidates for Board Hearings Officer positions due to their direct experience conducting hearings. While serving in their respective county as a Hearings Officer, they retain their certification, but if they were to apply and be hired by the Board as a Hearings Officer, they would lose their certification after five years.

Right now, one Board Member and one manager at our agency stand to lose their certifications if they remain at the Board beyond five years. The Board of Parole fulfills important statutory functions that have meaningful impacts on community safety in Oregon. The Board benefits from having highly qualified and experienced community corrections officers and managers providing their years of insight and experience in working with individuals on supervision to hold them accountable, address their various needs, identify risk and help them reduce their risk in the community.

After submitting SB 41 for consideration, DPSST provided feedback to the Board which has been submitted to this committee. They have suggested that instead of the amendment to ORS 181A.585, ORS 181A.355 be amended to include under subsection (b)(A) that an officer includes one who “is certified as a Parole and Probation officer and is employed full-time by the Board of Parole & Post-Prison Supervision.” The Board is in support of this amendment as submitted by DPSST.

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

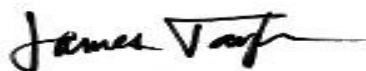
Respectfully,



Michael Hsu, Chairperson



Greta Lowry, Vice-Chairperson



James Taylor, Board Member



John Bailey, Board Member



Dylan Arthur, Executive Director