



## Testimony in favor of HB 2002 – sentencing, “good time”, and funding issues

We have learned a lot in the past 25 years about underlying causes of anti-social behavior and violence, about brain development, mental illness, substance use disorders, and effects of past trauma, and about what kinds of crime prevention and rehabilitation work. We understand the injustices of racial and economic disparities in criminal justice outcomes.

Automatically assigning a certain and unalterable incarceration time for each particular crime category may make sense in a punishment-only system, and it may have seemed like a fair system in the 1990s. But the threat of long sentences has not deterred crime; we have mass incarceration today with over 13,000 Oregonians in our prisons.

By 2021, we have learned that one-size-fits-all punishments without consideration of each individual’s circumstances do not lead to best outcomes. If our current goals are prevention and rehabilitation and successfully reintegrating people back into our communities, we need to update our Oregon policies to fit current knowledge about best practices.

In 2021, we should look at each lawbreaker’s individual circumstances before deciding on the best way to hold them accountable. Sentencing Guidelines can relate to addressing particular crimes, but sentence deviations both up and down should be decided by the judges whose elections have been approved by the people. In addition, “good behavior” reductions in prison sentences, as well as in post-prison supervision, should be available for everyone, as it benefits both the prisoner and the Department of Correction and ultimately the community as well.

In 2021 we should stop spending so much of our state funding on locking people up and spend much more on programs for disadvantaged communities, on mental health and drug treatment, on victim services. In 2021 we should assist formerly incarcerated individuals’ in their reintegration into our communities and not saddle them with fees, fines and requirements that prevent their success.

HB 2002 contains these up-to-date reforms of Oregon’s criminal legal system, and should be supported by the Judiciary Committee and passed by the entire Legislature.