

Chair Bynum and members of the committee,

My name is Andie Cortes and I am a Parole and Probation Officer in Douglas County. I am submitting testimony regarding HB2002, but first I would like to give you some history of my experience. In 1994, I began my career with the Department of Human Services (DHS) as a case manager assisting families with TANF, food stamps and Oregon Health Plan services. During that time, I worked with families and individuals who were struggling with a multitude of issues such as financial barriers, housing, employment, criminal justice involvement, child welfare, substance abuse, domestic violence and mental health. I worked with these families and individuals to access resources to help reduce these issues and barriers. In 2002, I left DHS and took a position as Parole and Probation Officer and continue that job today. For 14 years I supervised a gender specific caseload, I worked with women who were involved in the criminal justice system. I have supervised a general caseload for several years and am currently supervising individuals who have been convicted of a sex offense. I have a combined 27 years of experience working with individuals needing assistance, in some manner, to improve their circumstances. Over those 27 years I have watched as the agencies I work for, and with, have made strides to improve those systems. The Parole and Probation Officer I was in 2002, is not the same Parole and Probation Officer I am today, and I am grateful for that.

I see House Bill 2002 as an effort to continue making strides to improve our systems, however, I have concerns that in this effort there will be unintended consequences.

**Section 27:**

The language in this portion of the HB 2002 seems to be vague and difficult to interpret. If by wearing a protective vest would that “resemble” a uniform of a peace officer? Part of my duties are to have contacts with persons on supervision in the community and their homes. These contacts are unannounced and at times can be unsafe situations. Our clothing and protective gear that we wear clearly state that we are Parole and Probation Officers, but it seems from this language that may not suffice.

**Section 28:**

While I believe I understand the intent of this section, I believe it creates unintended consequences. I have some individuals who reside at the same place they work, am I now not to have a firearm while conducting the home visit? I have often been in the community conducting field work and been asked to attend a meeting at a social service office at the last moment, what am I to do with my firearm while I go into the social service meeting? I have participated in numerous Family Decision Meetings, often at the request of the person I am supervising, as part of the support group and to reinforce the work they have done. To assume that while engaged in official duties at a location where social services and or benefits are issued, or a place of employment cannot become a place where public safety is a concern is worrisome. I cannot predict when a situation can change into a use of force scenario.

### **SECTION 30**

This section would undermine the success of the Earned Discharge Program we are currently following. Earned Discharge has been an invaluable motivation for individuals to comply with conditions of their supervision. Individuals have been more willing to engage in treatment resources and work on their case plan to be successful in the community since we have implemented the Earned Discharge Program. As written, a sex offender can have multiple violations for failing to comply with sex offense specific treatment, have contact with minors or their victims and as long as they have not absconded and have not committed a new felony or person Class A misdemeanor, they will successfully complete their probation in half of the ordered time. Earned Discharge can hold the person on supervision to a level where they have indeed been successful on their supervision and they too can complete in half of their ordered time.

### **SECTION 36.**

In this section it does not appear to consider all the work that has been done to reduce jail sanctions by our agency. We use a sanctioning grid to ensure that the person on supervisions behavior and risk level are what determine the appropriate sanction should be. We use evidence-based practices to support the decisions and sanctions we impose. To limit sanctions and revocations, as written, does not allow to consider the totality of an individual's circumstances and public safety.

In closing I ask that you consider my thoughts regarding HB 2002. While we will always need to strive to improve, to make changes without considering the unintended consequences will benefit no one.

Respectfully,

*Andie Cortes*

Parole and Probation Officer

Douglas County