



TO: Senate Committee on Judiciary
FROM: Mae Lee Browning, Oregon Criminal Defense Lawyers Association
DATE: February 7, 2022
RE: Support for SB 1584 – Justice for Exonerees

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of OCDLA, I submit this testimony in support of SB 1584.

The Oregon Criminal Defense Lawyers Association is a nonprofit professional association for experts, private investigators, and attorneys who represent Oregon’s children and parents in juvenile dependency proceedings, youth in juvenile delinquency proceedings, adults in criminal proceedings at the trial and appellate level, as well as civil commitment proceedings throughout the state of Oregon.

OCDLA enthusiastically supports SB 1584. We applaud Senators Dembrow, Gelser Blouin, Prozanski, and Thatcher, among others, for chief sponsoring this historic bill that will would bring Oregon in line with 37 other states¹ that have laws to compensate wrongfully convicted people.

Only people who can present affirmative proof they are innocent can qualify for compensation under SB 1584, so the person who had their sentence reversed on a technicality would not qualify. SB 1584 provides for a fixed amount (\$65,000) for every year a person spent in prison, and a lesser amount (up to \$25,000) of every year of parole, post-prison supervision, or on the sex offender registry.

This bill will not have a large fiscal impact,² however, it will have a life-changing financial impact for the person who was wrongfully convicted. People released after years of wrongful imprisonment have lost out on earning an income for all those years. They were also not able to pursue an education that would position themselves to earn a living. Wrongfully convicted people will face immense struggles trying to meet the financial obligations of providing for their basic needs and establishing a life outside of prison. SB 1584 will help with the non-monetary needs of a person who was wrongfully convicted, such as connecting the person with housing supports and counseling services. This Committee is well aware of the myriad collateral consequences of convictions. SB 1584 will also help seal a person’s record so they can move on with their lives and not needlessly face additional barriers from their wrongful conviction.

OCDLA urges this Committee to vote “yes” on SB 1584.

¹ As well as the Federal Government and the District of Columbia.

² Since 1989, 15 people have been wrongfully incarcerated in Oregon.