

March 12, 2023

Senator Deb Patterson, chair, Oregon Senate Committee on Health Care and members of the committee

RE: SB520 regarding early medical release from custody-**Support**

Senator Patterson:

I support the passage of SB520. I worked in the infirmary/hospice at Two Rivers Correctional Institution in Umatilla. We cared for the inmates who required 24 hour custodial care. These inmates suffered from advanced medical problems (cancer, strokes, heart failure, Alzheimer's disease, etc.) and had no ability to care for themselves. Many of them had no awareness of their surroundings.

Patient G. had two strokes and due to delayed care was permanently frozen in a sitting position. He could not move his arms or legs and had no control of bodily function. He will not get better but will continue to live in a frozen state indefinitely.

Patient H. could walk and talk but advanced Alzheimer's disease left him with no awareness of others or himself. He wandered aimlessly lost in fragmented memories of the distant past. Having been a physically healthy person he could potentially live for decades.

Patient S. was a young man with advanced colon cancer. The disease had spread to his entire body and resulted in slowly wasting away. His body lasted for months but he required 24 hour care and knew nothing of what was going on around him.

There were many more. Who benefits from this type of care?

These inmates committed crimes but continued incarceration neither rehabilitates them nor punishes them. If they are released nothing will change with regard to the consequences of their crime. Victims will continue their recovery knowing that their perpetrator continues to be punished.

Outside of prison a wider range of medical providers (including family) can deliver support that assures humane care in a more cost effective manner. Terminal care is expensive. We have the opportunity with SB520 to shift those expenses out of DOC and into the community where care is better and costs are lower.

My experience in the TRCI infirmary showed me that we are providing marginal care to people with advanced, irreversible medical conditions at a very high cost. Wouldn't it be better to provide better care at a lower cost without compromising the healing benefits that victims feel from continuing to hold their perpetrators accountable for their crime?

SB520 is a unique opportunity to do something better at a lower cost. Please vote in favor of this bill.

Scott Strickland