



March 29, 2023

To: House Committee On Judiciary  
From: Zach Winston, Director of Policy and Outreach

Re: **Testimony in Support of HB 2890**

Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Andersen and Wallan, and members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Zach Winston, and I'm the Director of Policy and Outreach at the Oregon Justice Resource Center. I'm writing in support of HB 2890.

The Oregon Justice Resource Center promotes civil rights and improves legal representation for communities that have often been underserved in the past, including incarcerated Oregonians. Our work with incarcerated Oregonians in state prisons and county jails provides us with unique insight into issues experienced by adults-in-custody which serves as the foundation of our advocacy.

Throughout our organization's conversations, advocacy, and research with Oregon's adults-in-custody (AICs), especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, many issues have been made very clear, of which three are directly relevant to the passage of HB 2890: 1) the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC) needs to be overseen by a wholly independent and resourced entity, 2) there is a lack of access to community-level quality mental health and substance use-related care for AICs, and 3) inconsistent and expensive access to telecommunication devices and services prevents AICs from remaining in contact with family, friends, and legal counsel.

When the 2022 Joint Task Force on Corrections Medical Care concluded its work and published its findings, many of the nine recommendations it offered were directly related to addressing the issues our organization has identified in a meaningful and effective way that would improve the health, quality of life, and reentry of incarcerated Oregonians.

HB 2890 would codify three of the Task Force's recommendations by directing the DOC Ombudsman to report staffing and resource needs to the Legislature to effectively oversee DOC, having DOC ensure that all AICs have access to mental health and substance use care that is equivalent to community standards, and ensuring that AICs have access to personal electronic devices that can aid in communication with family and legal counsel, provide access to educational materials, and offer telemedicine services for expedient healthcare needs.

As a government that has a constitutional responsibility to provide healthcare-related services and resources to our incarcerated community, it's important that Oregon pass HB 2890 to begin to meet what is rightfully expected of it. The clients that our organization represents deserve better treatment and care, and it is incumbent on this legislative body to meet those needs.

We would like to thank Representative Dexter for her dedicated work on these important issues. Please continue the essential work completed by the 2022 Joint Task Force on Corrections Medical Care and vote HB 2890 out of committee with a "Do Pass" recommendation.

Thank you.