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To the Oregon Senate Judiciary Committee,

Regarding Senate Bill 579 - Allows persons convicted of felony to register to vote, update voter registration and vote in elections while incarcerated.

As of late I have heard this statement made numerous times "it's the Oregon Way"...which is as follows:

At its foundation, the Oregon Way is about prioritizing employee health and wellbeing by normalizing the correctional environment and, in turn, improving the outcomes for incarcerated people.

The Oregon Way is heading for the Department of Corrections Oregon Accountability Model...which is as follows:

The Oregon Accountability Model (OAM) encompasses the simultaneous, coordinated, and efficient implementation of many Departments of Corrections' (DOC) initiatives and projects that provide a foundation for adults in custody (AICs) to lead successful lives upon release.

The ultimate goal of the OAM is to improve public safety. The model ties together many concurrent and interrelated efforts of the department and its partners into a cohesive strategy to reduce recidivism and help AICs to become productive citizens.

Restoring voting rights to those that are incarcerated is putting the Oregon Way and the Oregon Accountability Model's principles into action.

When individuals are asked to consider community situations, topics, and problems, there is a heightened level of accountability to that community. Allowing those who are incarcerated to participate in societal issues gives them the opportunity to care about and be responsible for their communities. It is a productive way for them to model what and who they will be upon release...part of their communities. Restoring voting rights would be a strategic way for Oregon to reduce recidivism, and help individuals become productive members of society.....which is the goal of incarceration.

According to the proclamations and goals of the Oregon Way and the Oregon Accountability Model, establishing voting rights for those that are incarcerated meets the theory behind them, and practical application of them.

Thank you for considering this statement.

Since I've always tried to vote I have missed the opportunity to participate in the voting process. So voting for me personally would be awesome. It would be hard to vote for laws and bond things because we wouldn't have access to the material, we would need to make an educational choice but voting for people especially would be great! ROBERTA SAMARD

I would love to be able to vote. That is one of the privileges I miss. I feel that being able to vote would be very beneficial to us and the state. SUSAN CAMPBELL

if I were allowed to vote while incarcerated it would reinforce the pro social, independence that I have developed during my time inside of these walls. Knowing that I am still an individual who has a place in the community and society, and that my voice is heard on matters I find important. Voting on things that will affect the world I still live in would validate that I still am among the population, and not just a number who has been forgotten by her peers. AMANDA HANCOCK

Being able to vote while I am incarcerated is important to me because me being in prison doesn't stop my children from being affected by what's going on in the world. ANTOINETTE GARRETT

Incarcerated people will return to the community as neighbors and leaders. Having the ability to vote keeps those incarcerated involved in what is happening there. When you have a voice you feel connected. It encourages this population of people to stay informed with the issues on the outside that will affect them upon release. This builds a stronger community overall. CAROLYN EXUM

I did also respond to a card that was sent to me by a company in Portland that was working on this same issue and I wrote a letter in support of voting while in prison. I didn't actually vote when I was out because I lived in Washington state where felons could not vote. But I did participate in my tribal elections and that made feel like part of the community and I think it would also make people feel like a part of society if they were allowed to vote in prison. I also think that it would keep people more abreast of current events and make them more responsible individuals. I support this issue across the board. Please let me know how it goes for you. MICHELLE LARGAY

Dear Sirs: No one appreciates Freedom more than someone who has none. Yes, Adults In Custody have chosen, through our actions, our lot in life. We are, however, paying our debt to society with the understanding that we will, someday, be "square with the house", rather than branded forever and discarded as refuse. I am working for atonement. I have served my country, and continue to love and believe in its principles. I trust in the democratic process, but am excluded from participating in it while in custody. My fate, in this interim, is firmly in the hands of others. What is this, if not slavery? I urge you to look to the captive population, not as chattel, but as fellow citizens who deserve a voice in their country; a hand on the wheel of their fates. Thank you for your consideration.

VETEREN BRIDGET McDERMOTTMUESKE

VERBAL TESTIMONY

THANK YOU SENATE CHAIR PROZANSKI AND COMMITTEE

When women in prison begin the processes involved in rehabilitating themselves, they start taking accountability for the reasons behind their incarceration, making amends for the damage they have caused, and they start rebuilding broken and damaged relationships. They work diligently to restore the broken relationship between themselves and their children. Women look for ways to parent their children from prison. Some of those ways are doing homework in the visiting room, reading books over the phone, and often simultaneously sharing the experience of getting an education with their children. Other ways to parent from prison are through communicating about the things you do and the activities that you participate in. Restoring voting rights gives mothers an opportunity to set an example for their children and is a tool to utilize in their own rehabilitation. It provides an opportunity to educate their children about their responsibilities as members of society, and that voting is one of the ways that you support your community and get involved in how it is organized and ran.

In addition, allowing those who are incarcerated to vote gives them an opportunity to be responsible for something outside of themselves. This is a key component in the rehabilitation process, which is the purpose of incarceration. Rehabilitation happens more often when you care about the outcome, feel connected to, or feel a responsibility to something...the knowledge that you're going to go back out to the community helps an individual feel connected not only to their community but to the their future and to their success. A lot of people go to prison and get stuck

in the feelings that are associated with incarceration... guilt, sorrow, regret and depression and granted committing crimes should come with feelings of remorse, but remorse unattended does not create a rehabilitated citizen. Learning how to care about your family, your community, and yourself again is part of the rehabilitation process. People are incarcerated so that they can learn how to be productive, responsible individuals, caring parents and community members. Restoring voting rights gives people who are releasing back into their communities the tools needed to do so in a successful and responsible way.