

Submitter: Scott Strickland
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure: SB1560

Chair Prozanski and members of the Committee on the Judiciary
RE: SB1560 pertaining to establishment of a Medical Release Advisory Committee
Statement in Support
February 7, 2024

I support the development of a path that would allow certain inmates to be released from the Oregon Department of Corrections based on medical need. The procedure would need to carefully balance the needs of any victims and the safety of the citizens of Oregon but releasing certain inmates is good policy. Terminally ill people can be better cared for in the community with their support group readily available and utilizing services that are already in place. Prisons are not equipped to manage the complex needs of the dying patient and it is costly to provide those services. Oregonians would be better served by releasing certain critically ill inmates to community care and those inmates and their family would benefit from a more compassionate care.

I was an Oregon DOC volunteer hospice and infirmary worker for several years. I witnessed the last days of many inmates and held many hands as those men died. They were often alone and were deprived of the supportive care of family and friends. Basic comfort measures such as pain relief, nausea control, diarrhea management and appropriate hygiene were lacking. There are many situations that I recall vividly.

Patient GG had two strokes and did not receive Physical Therapy, leaving him frozen in a sitting position. Every movement was agonizing for him. Someone needed to serve him every bite of food. Most of the day he was totally alone. He would have been better served with therapy and a team of volunteers and family to care for his medical needs and provide support.

Patient BH had advanced Alzheimer's Disease. He suffered from the lack of a consistent and supportive environment leaving him lonely and confused. His family lived hundreds of miles away. In a memory facility he would receive the necessary care and have the benefit of family and friends from his community.

Patient AS had advanced colon cancer. He suffered from constant nausea, pain, and loss of bowel control. He received some care but his family could only be with him occasionally. His pain control was erratic and inadequate. With more comprehensive care his final days would have been comfortable and dignified.

I support a path to early release for critically ill inmates that balances the needs of the victims and the citizens of Oregon. Certain carefully selected patients could be released to community care which would benefit them and their family while reducing the cost burden to Oregonians. Everyone would win if SB1560 becomes law.

Respectfully,
Scott Strickland