

Testimony submitted by: LaJuana Decker  
Committee: Senate Committee on Judiciary  
Measure: SB 821

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee on Judiciary,

I write in opposition to SB 821.

A pearl of wisdom from those who make their living in the woods: A lumberjack is said to have remarked that if his life depended upon his ability to cut down a tree in five minutes, he would spend three minutes sharpening his axe.

The State Board of Parole and Post-Prison Supervision has been given a task and the lives of Oregonians depend on it—assessing the risk level of sex offenders released into the community, a task they say they cannot complete by the deadline.

SB 821 proposes that because the Board faces this tough deadline, they should give up and throw out the deadline. Not change the deadline. Not re-evaluate the process. Not approach the task in a more efficient way. Not sharpen the axe.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Oregon has a history of being the state with the highest per capita number of sex offenders among all the U.S. states, with 790 sex offenders per 100,000 Oregonians in 2024,<sup>1</sup> a 15% increase since 2019.<sup>2</sup> Oregonians, especially women and children, are feeling increasingly unsafe. This is a time for redoubling the effort to quickly assess and level sex offenders who have been released into their neighborhoods.

Research shows that recidivism rates for sex offenders is 24% after 15 years<sup>3</sup>, meaning that 190 of those 790 offenders are likely to victimize other Oregonians after being released. Indeed, lives depend on the completing the leveling task as soon as possible.

The priority should not be eliminating the deadline, but finding more efficient ways to accomplish the task. There are other ways of leveling, including adopting the level already given to an offender in another jurisdiction. The deadline could also be reasonably extended, but eliminating the deadline entirely endangers the lives of Oregonians.

Oregon has a responsibility to ensure the safety of Oregonians. We cannot simply hide our heads in the sand and pretend that ignoring the risk these former offenders represent will make that risk go away.

Instead of giving up, let's sharpen the axe and fell this tree.

For the safety of all Oregonians, I urge you to vote no on SB 821.

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<sup>1</sup> "How Many Registered Sex Offenders Are in Your State?: SafeHome," SafeHome.org, September 17, 2024, <https://www.safehome.org/data/registered-sex-offender-stats/>.

<sup>2</sup> Chart: The U.S. states with the most sex offenders per capita | Statista. Accessed March 6, 2025. <https://www.statista.com/chart/18575/registered-sex-offenders-per-100000-inhabitants/>.

<sup>3</sup> "Recidivism of Adult Sexual Offenders": U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, July 2015, <https://www.ojp.gov/library/publications/recidivism-adult-sexual-offenders>