



To: Joint Committee on Public Safety
From: Katie Riley, Oregon Public Health Association
Date: April 5, 2013

Chair and members of the Committee,

My name is Katie Riley and I am a volunteer with the Oregon Public Health Association. I am also a retired faculty member of the Department of Public Health and Preventive Medicine at OHSU. I am here today to testify in support of the Oregon Public Safety Package, HB 3194.

In the years since Measure 11 was passed, we have learned that the adolescent brain is not fully developed until the approximate age of 25. Adolescents are impulsive and can make quick decisions that they later regret. If they are incarcerated at an early age for a long period, they are kept away from normal social interactions and responsibilities that would give them the opportunity to mature appropriately. In addition, if they are incarcerated with older felons, they are more likely to commit further crimes when they are released. It is important that consequences for youth who break the law be immediate, however long term incarceration, particularly if incarcerated with adults, can further hinder their development. This bill recognizes these factors and should be supported not only for the financial savings that will result but also for the human development of the youth who are affected by its provisions.

I have personally been affected by Measure 11 and the benefits of the bill. At the age of 17 my son was charged with a Measure 11 crime (Robbery 1) and served almost 4 years before being released under a second-look plea bargain agreement over thirteen years ago. Under second look incarcerated youth have to prove themselves to the sentencing judge and anyone who is released has to serve on probation and post-prison supervision for the rest of their sentence—5 additional years for my son. My son benefited greatly from the second look opportunity—it gave him incentive to do his best while incarcerated and he also benefitted from the transition program. Since his release he has had no problems with the law. In fact, his experiences have helped him find his calling in life as he now works with youth as a gang outreach counselor in Portland. He has mentored Native American autistic youth. He has dedicated his life to helping youth stay out of trouble and avoid incarceration themselves. Every day my son drives into Portland and works with gang-affected youth, often on the streets late at night. He has given talks about drugs, gangs, and violence to the National Indian Youth Police Academy, the Native American Juvenile Justice Summit, Straight Talk, and the Governor's Summit on Overrepresentation of Minority Youth where he was awarded a Governor's YOUTH award for his service. He views working with youth as his purpose in life and his joy, he has turned his life around to become a productive member of society.

HB 3194 would give other youth the chance to prove themselves. However, I would recommend going even further and endorse HB 3193, which waives youth to juvenile court and I would also recommend making the provisions of HB 3194 retroactive. Youth who serve time under Measure 11 are still branded as ex-felons—for life. They have difficulty finding jobs, housing, and getting an education. My son has been turned down for jobs and housing and it is difficult for him to get career advancement. I have met others who served under Measure 11 and are now upstanding members of the community—but they have difficulty finding work and often rely on others to sign for housing. If the label of ex-felon could be removed, it would make a world of difference in helping them contribute even more, both personally and as tax-paying citizens, to our community.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. Again, I ask for your support of HB 3194 and urge your vote to move the bill forward.