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The Honorable Jackie Winters, Co-Chair  
The Honorable Duane Stark, Co-Chair  
Members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety  
900 Court Street  
Salem, OR 97301

February 21, 20017

Dear Co-Chairs and members of the Committee:

I am writing in support of SB 5042, the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) budget and bond funding for the continuation of OYA's 10-Year Strategic Facilities Plan.

I am most familiar with the Oak Creek facility for young women, having taught photography there for more than four years. In fact, I addressed the committee during the last legislative session about the work I do and the impact it's had on me. As an artist and teacher, I don't exactly feel qualified to discuss predictive analysis models or strength based programming. But what I can tell you is, as ironic as it may sound, the young women in the care of the Oregon Youth Authority are most likely in the best place they could be. They get a quality education, counselling and vocational training. They also receive essential intangibles from the staff and administration; people who always impress me with their compassion and commitment. The young women are taught life skills and gain insight into themselves and the importance of making the right choices in a safe and nurturing environment. Over the years, I have seen them grow, develop and transform. For many of them, they have broken the cycle of abuse and violence.

At the end of each art+poetry program I teach at Oak Creek, I tell the girls that I hope I never see them again. They understand what I mean. Because of the level of supportive programming they receive from OYA, my hope is most usually realized.

I urge you to do everything you can to help OYA continue their momentum and support their vital work.

Thank you,



Barry Shapiro



### WHEN I CAME TO OAK CREEK

When I arrived here, I thought I was going  
to be left here and forgotten. I never thought  
Oak Creek would be so supportive.

I wasn't scared on the streets or the road,  
of the cold, of the people surrounding me.  
I was scared of the police coming, locking me away.

It took time to realize I did it to myself.  
If I locked myself up, I can also see myself free.

I was scared of outcomes, but not of change—  
only chances. I'd rather not be shy and have to lie.

I am still afraid that I may not make it.  
I'm scared I won't be smart enough to get an education,  
that I won't be strong enough to bully my emotions,  
that I'll continue to fear people won't like me.

To be myself.

Rachel L. (age 16)