



Legislative Testimony

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

February 20, 2017

The Honorable Jeff Barker, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary

RE: House Bill 2251

Chair Barker and members of the House Judiciary Committee, I am Heidi Steward, Assistant Director of the Offender Management and Rehabilitation Division for the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC). I am here to testify in support of the bill and answer any questions.

What the Bill Does:

As introduced, House Bill 2251 ensures any person under the age of 18 cannot be incarcerated in a DOC institution.

Background Information:

Research indicates that trying youth as adults in the criminal justice system and exposing them to the adult correctional system makes them more likely to commit future crimes and puts their safety and wellbeing at risk. Through agreement and longstanding practice, youth under the age of 18 are housed at the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA), and are not housed at DOC to prevent exposure to adult offenders.

Through HB 3183 (2013) and HB 4037 (2014), youthful offenders are transported directly to OYA, bypassing DOC's Intake Center. To ensure that both agencies remain committed to best practices for youth now and in the future, statutory amendments are needed.

Additionally, these amendments are necessary to ensure continued compliance with the sight and sound requirements of the Prison Rape Elimination Act and the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act.

Issues Addressed by the Bill:

This bill modernizes statutory language to accurately reflect the current practices of the department. Codifying this practice will ensure continued compliance with the Prison Rape Elimination Act and the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act.

Through recent conversations with the Oregon Youth Authority, our two agencies are working to draft amendments to establish criteria for transfers of those under 18 to DOC facilities under extraordinary and limited circumstances.

For the reasons stated above, DOC supports HB 2251.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Submitted by:

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