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February 11, 2019

To: House Judiciary Committee
RE: Innocence and post-conviction DNA testing

Chair Williamson and members of the committee:

For the record my name is Carla Piluso, and I proudly represent House District 50, the great city of Gresham.

I submit this testimony in support of the Oregon Innocence Project. I spent thirty years in law enforcement, and I know there are occasional mistakes in the workings of our criminal justice system. It pains me—and it should pain all of us in positions of leadership—to think that there are currently people in Oregon prisons who do not belong there.

One important tool to prevent these injustices is post-conviction DNA testing, allowing people already in prison to test evidence that was overlooked or misinterpreted during their trial. But our current system denies many people access to this tool. Under Oregon's current standard, it is extremely difficult for the wrongly convicted to successfully petition for testing, putting up a serious roadblock on the path to exoneration.

I testified Monday morning in support of Senate Bill 321, which is a pragmatic fix to this state of affairs. As you will hear, post-conviction DNA testing is an issue that affects only a small percentage of the individuals convicted in Oregon—but it has momentous consequences in the lives of those affected.

I want to thank Michael Morton, an exoneree from Texas, for making the journey to be with us today. I hope that you will join me this session to work against the injustices that kept him in prison for nearly 25 years.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Carla C. Piluso
Oregon State Representative, House District 50