



February 10, 2019

## *Red Lodge Transition Services*

Oregon State Legislature  
Attention: House Judiciary Committee  
900 Court Street N.E.  
Salem, OR 97301


Dear members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing in support of HB 2631. One of the most glaring Barriers to Re-entry is the lack of legal assistance available to people with a history of incarceration and felony conviction. When addressing the needs of incarcerated individuals, women are the fastest growing segment of our prison population. It's also important to realize that incarceration affects the entire family, not just one person. If our goal is to reduce incarceration numbers and increase successful re-entry we must first work with helping people address and resolve legal disputes.

In December 2013, through a fellowship, Julia Yoshimoto begun the Red Lodge Legal Services program with the purpose of helping fill the unmet civil legal needs of Native American women incarcerated at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility. In 2015 the Red Lodge Legal Services program evolved and expanded into the Women's Justice Project at the Oregon Justice Resource Center. As the Legal Program Coordinator for Red Lodge, and now as the Director of the Women's Justice Project Julia identified legal issues that are, or may become, barriers to successful reentry. Most of the women's cases are not easily resolved; they are typically intertwined with other issues that a lay person is not able to sort out on their own. One of the most unique cases was a woman born in Canada, adopted by U.S. Citizens and abandoned by her adoptive parents as a teen. This woman had no state issued ID. Julia had to start by accessing tribal and adoptive records from Canada, in order to create a paper trail covered up by the adoptive parents. It took months to complete the process. Upon release, I was able to take this individual to DMV and obtain proper identification for her. She currently lives and works in Oregon.

During the fellowship with Red Lodge, Ms. Yoshimoto performed a wide range of legal assistance for over 30 women while they were incarcerated, involving child visitation issues, Department of Motor Vehicle status/fines, , judgements, garnishments, DHS issues, property disputes, tribal enrollment paperwork and more. This important work makes successful re-entry possible for individuals who are striving to make a better life for themselves, their children and their community.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Trish Jordan, Executive Director