

February 16, 2019

Dear Chair Williamson, Co-Chairs Gorsek and Sprenger, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in strong support of HB 2631.

Hi. My name is Jackie Whitt and I am a state of Oregon Traditional Health Worker. I provide peer services for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated Native American through Red Lodge Transition Services. I have experienced intergenerational incarceration and I am formerly incarcerated. I believe in the transformative power of reentry services.

I support this bill because I have witnessed, time and again, the outcomes of individuals' lives who are offered reentry services, and those who are not offered reentry services. The people who are offered services have support, encouragement, and hope that empowers them to stay the course of rebuilding one's life after prison. The ones I've witnessed, who are not offered support end up returning to the people and behaviors that led the to prison.

I can also speak to this first hand because I was one of those people who received services and experienced a great deal of success. I was also one of those who did not receive services, the first time I got out of prison. I eventually got backed into the corner of a dreadful circumstance and did not see any way out. I returned to the behaviors that I hated the most and because I did not have assistance for civil legal help, I started making poor choices that led me back to prison.

I also want to add that my mom has been to prison twice. The first time she was not offered any civil legal services and also went back to prison. The second time, she was offered some civil legal help and I watched her sort out a lot of confusing matters that gave her hope and the ability to press on.

I hope that you will support HB 2631. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Jackie Whitt*

Jackie Whitt

Oregon Tradition Health Worker

Peer Support, Red Lodge Transition Services