



March 9, 2021

Dear Chair Bynum, Co-Chair Noble, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon, **we would like to share our support for HB 3055, a pilot program that would direct facilities to assess and address the health care needs of persons upon intake at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility.**

NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon advocates for the legal right of all individuals to choose if, when, and how they want to start and raise a family. We recognize reproductive rights are inconsequential, however, if an individual cannot also access high quality health care, educational opportunities, family support programs, and a living-wage job. We believe public policy must be centered on the experiences and intersections of communities most-impacted by barriers to essential reproductive and gender-affirming health care. Justice-involved people are often medically underserved and may have compounding or co-existing health needs.¹ We believe the in-take process is a public health opportunity to provide quality care to people that have faced the greatest barriers to accessing appropriate medical attention. We believe that HB 3055 would be an important first step towards combating pre-existing and systemic health inequities due to race and economic disparities in our state.

After hearing painful stories of those unable to have full agency in personal decisions regarding their reproductive health, we have come to recognize the unique health care needs of justice-involved women and/or people identify as gender non-binary. Over the last two years we have been honored to participate as a member of the Judicial Committee's Work Group on Gender Responsiveness. During this time we have been grateful for the opportunity to listen and learn from a number of compassionate and insightful members of our community, who have bravely shared their experiences as people who have been formerly incarcerated:

*We have heard stories of mothers unable to afford to call family members, those who were delayed access to an abortion by more than a month, stories of unsafe conditions when giving birth, stories of sexual assault, stories of racial discrimination, and know that there are many stories we haven't heard from people who are too afraid to speak out. **We believe their stories and we want to create a process to ensure these stories inform better health outcomes and living conditions for all.***

We want to recognize our current corrections system is complicit in denying access to quality reproductive and maternal health care to a growing population of Oregonians;² nationally, only 54% of those pregnant upon admission to a state prison reported receiving any type of pregnancy

¹ Oregon Justice Resource Center, "[Women in Prison in Oregon](#)" (September 2016)

² <https://www.naacp.org/criminal-justice-fact-sheet/>



care.³ The number of women and people who identify as gender non-binary imprisoned in the Oregon Department of Corrections has nearly tripled over the past 20 years.⁴ For women of color—one of the fastest growing populations impacted by incarceration—these factors are often exacerbated by institutional racism.

Justice-involved women and gender non-binary individuals have experienced childhood victimization, family violence, unhealthy relationships, unsafe housing, and often are of lower socioeconomic statuses.⁵

We want to thank Representative Dexter for recognizing the current and compounding health needs and disparities faced by women in Coffee Creek and for introducing this legislation. If passed, HB 3035 would ensure adults in custody at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility have comprehensive access to essential health services including:

- Physical healthcare
- Reproductive healthcare (inclusive of abortion)
- Peripartum care (including prenatal, postnatal, and the ability to breastfeed newborns)
- Gender-affirming healthcare
- Mental healthcare (inclusive of support for toxic stress and non-DSM diagnoses)
- Care for Substance Use Disorders

The bill would also ensure that trusted health care navigators are available to people who are incarcerated, as well as the additional benefit of added transparency by being able to monitor public health outcomes such as life expectancy, obesity, vaccination rates, STD infections, poor pregnancy outcomes, infant mortality rates, and others as established for CCOs. For these reasons, **NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon urges your support of HB 3035.**

Sincerely,

Jeanine Morales
Deputy Director, NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon

³ <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2019/12/05/pregnancy/>

⁴ https://www.prisonpolicy.org/graphs/OR_Women_Rates_1978_2015.html

⁵ <https://womensjustice.net/the-facts>