

Dear Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation,

My name is Guage Lee Gray. On the morning of December 28th, 2014, I drove while intoxicated at a time when the roads were icy and slick, which resulted in an accident that took the lives of both my friend Garrett Zimmer and my girlfriend Marri Wellbaum. As a result, I was convicted in 2015 and sentenced to 100 months with no programs, trans-leave, or “good time”. My current release date is May 27th, 2023.

I am writing to you to show support for the passing of SB 191, which would grant inmates with Measure 11 charges, such as myself, the opportunity to earn a reduction in their sentences by portraying that they have been rehabilitated and are making a significant effort to turn their lives around. All other states provide a percentage of good time in one form or another to all inmates in their respected populations. Oregon is unique in the sense that measure 11 offenders are excluded from this incentive that all other inmates are granted.

Like many other Measure 11 offenders, I have made tremendous progress at creating a productive life for myself that will help me be a benefit to society. While incarcerated, I have obtained my G.E.D., taken several college courses from Blue Mountain Community College, obtained a refrigeration license (E.P.A. 608), and began an apprentice program that will lead to me acquiring a journeyman electrician license. While earning these accomplishments, I have stayed out of trouble my entire incarceration to this point in time. As previously mentioned, I am currently working as an electrician apprentice on a unique crew of inmates that work for Oregon Department of Corrections facilities. My crew moves from prison to prison installing optical fiber cabling and improving each facility or state building’s security systems and overall data infrastructure. This inmate program is an opportunity that is extremely difficult to be awarded as there are several requirements, high expectations, and limited positions. Only four inmates out of the entire Oregon prison population can occupy these positions at a time, so you must always display a high level of determination and aptitude.

During my incarceration, I have witnessed several assaults. Many of these violations occur by people who have a release date that is set in stone, with no incentive to do good to possibly earn an earlier release date. The prisons are highly over-populated by Measure 11 inmates, who often turn to violence in the form of riots, extortion, gang representation and assault because they have lost all hope. By allowing all inmates the opportunity to earn even a small percentage reduction in their sentences, crime in the prison system would drop drastically. These people will gain a new sense of motivation, and will be more inclined to work towards their rehabilitation rather than becoming more dangerous before they are released back into society. The prison atmosphere is dangerous because these people have no form of encouragement to keep them from hurting others or themselves. First time offenders that get convicted of Measure 11 crimes sometimes spend decades in the system with no hope or possibility of going home any earlier for their good behavior.

Good time for me would give me the opportunity to earn back time to spend with my loved ones that are also affected by my incarceration. I have a grandfather who is dying, and without the opportunity of earning my early release, I may never see him again. More time with him would be the biggest form of motivation for me. My story is not unique, and I am pleading with you to see that we are human beings who deserve to be rehabilitated and awarded the opportunity at an earlier second chance. Thank you for considering the passing of SB 191.

Sincerely,
Mr. Guage Lee Gray