

March 31, 2021

To: The Oregon State Legislature
From: Francesca Anton
Ref.: SB191

~~Dear Oregon State Legislators,~~

I write to you today as a long-time Oregon voter since 1978, active in civic affairs, involved in education, a successful business owner, farmer and proud parent over the years, and now working hard to help restore my new community in the McKenzie River Valley after such a devastating Holiday Farm fire. I am educated and not deterred by the vagaries of social media ~~and Fox News. I actually READ.~~

But more importantly, I truly have something worthwhile to contribute to the discussion surrounding SB191, and am relieved to know that FINALLY we are addressing this horrendously regressive and embarrassing legislation, voted through with very little understanding of the ramifications on the part of most voters.

In 1993 I was part of a small team of individuals engaged by the then Oregon Governor's Office to quietly investigate the originators of Measure 11. What we learned would absolutely shock and dismay you.

Kevin Mannix played into the hands of conniving people with no education, especially no knowledge of criminal justice policy research. They were funded by a quiet Republican elite who had figured out that Fundamental Christians in Oregon would vote Republican, without doing any research on their own, if they could be captured by such emotionally charged topics as tough-on-crime and anti-abortion. This is not a joke. It's the real deal.

~~I was part of the group that vigorously fought this legislation from passing, but, like so much legislation put before the voters in the past 25 years, the voters were never encouraged to read the fine print, to think about the consequences of such potentially harmful and regressive legislation. No in-depth discussion ensued. Instead, they were cajoled by big money and emotional sound bites. This is how democracy gets destroyed, not to mention human rights. Through years of visitations to corrections facilities, speaking with Measure 11 families, I can say I have been personally exposed to what I would consider "cruel and unusual punishment" due to our Measure 11 legislation.~~

Nevertheless, I have been closely involved in 2 Measure 11 cases that originated in 2005. One, my cousin, his parents actually voted and supported Measure 11 at the time, experienced his and his family's life being destroyed by Measure 11. Good, upstanding people, but because he was poor, and his family ignorant of how the justice system works, he was sent to prison for 30 years when what he really needed was both financial and mental health help. It wasn't until his parents learned about the consequences of Measure 11 at a personal level, that they realized they had

made a horrible mistake voting for it. Fundamental, evangelical Christians, they had been led to believe that voting for Measure 11 would 'put the creeps and criminals away for once and for all'.

The other is a homosexual man, upstanding citizen and great contributor to his community, his family totally destroyed by a system that couldn't listen and was dead set against him from the beginning. He was given 18 years. During these years I have spent long hours visiting both, learning their stories, helping with what family members they had left, helping to set up music programs for the inmates at two prisons, and listening, listening, listening to the stories of other inmates and their families. My cousin's family now deals with constant shame that they didn't take time to read the fine print, and have been devastated by what happened to their beloved son. My fellow church member not only lost the best earning years of his life, but constantly tested out to have less than a 4% recidivation risk, which Measure 11 would not take into account at any time.

I can tell you with no hesitation, Measure 11 has failed far more people in Oregon than it could have ever hoped to help.

The failure of Measure 11 has been the elephant in the room ever since it was passed, but no one Democrat or Republican who took the time to really pay attention to its aftereffects, would step up to admit the failure of this sordidly regressive legislation BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T WANT TO BE PERCEIVED AS 'SOFT ON CRIME'. This is a stain on what has often been such a good history of progressive legislation in the past from the little state of Oregon; shameful.

This vote should not be a partisan vote. This should be a public apology to the citizens of Oregon for such regressive legislation that has crippled our already struggling justice system. There are many much better systems for dealing with the crimes people in Oregon deal with, 90% of which are simply consequences of poverty and racial injustice.

Both inmates I mention above have clean records and have, in fact, greatly contributed to the health of their correctional institutions, having earned years of early release IF THIS LEGISLATION PASSES.

It would mean more to them and their families than you might ever be able to imagine to effect their early release years earned.

I know our struggling criminal justice system can easily be put at the bottom of all your important lists of issues to address. But how we deal with our poor and disenfranchised citizens demonstrates the level of integrity we carry with us as we steer through life, both privately and publicly. Please give Oregonians the gift of correcting this horrible Oregon legislation.

Thank you,
Francesca Anton



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