



Oregon Voices  
PO Box 13175  
Salem, OR 97302

Feb. 8, 2021

TO: Senate Judiciary Committee  
RE: SB 207

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher and members of the committee:

My name is Ken Nolley and I am writing on behalf of Oregon Voices in support of SB 207. We have worked for more than a decade with incarcerated persons and we hear regularly both from persons inside and from the families of persons inside. We regularly hear concerns voiced over arbitrary and abusive treatment, lack of response to obvious medical needs, particularly for elderly adults in custody, and in the last year, concerns over ignored or inadequate Covid protocols—both by other AICs and prison staff, and a variety of other issues. By far the most pervasive concern we hear voiced is over neglect of basic and serious medical issues. This year, with Covid, the wildfires, the complications of evacuations and smoke, and finally the rapid transmission of Covid following the evacuations these concerns have grown enormously.

Once in a while, we are able to help just a little; we have developed good working relationships with some DOC staff in Salem, and sometimes working through them, we can get some help for an individual. But we know that we only see a sliver of the concerns that are out there, and the great majority of individuals and families do not know where to turn.

Often individuals have raised concerns inside that have not been deal with, and typically they are afraid to push too much out of fear of reprisal. Whether that fear is justified by the situation or not, it is real, widely pervasive, and it keeps people from pushing any further on the resources that they can see in front of them in their part of the institution they are in. An independent ombudsman could help enormously both to create greater transparency, and to help to facilitate communication between DOC management, staff, AICs, and their families.

We strongly support SB 207 and we hope that the committee will recommend its passage.

Sincerely,

Ken Nolley for Oregon Voices