

Testimony in Support of SB 207 by Jack Gray2-8-21

Independent oversight of the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC) is needed. An independent corrections ombudsman can help the DOC become a more effectively run organization. The legislature and the DOC should look at this not as a tattletelling obstruction but as an opportunity to flag problems, for constant improvement and to truly serve its constituencies.

I have talked to many current and former people in custody and to their family and friends. While the person is in custody all those impacted share an overwhelming feeling of helplessness in dealing with large and small problems of life in prison. The DOC's frustrating response to Covid 19 and their bungling of a change of telecommunication contractors exemplifies current problems. Adults in custody and their families get the run around on these issues from the DOC and in many cases those impacted just give up trying to right wrongs. It seems that expensive law suits are the only way to be heard and to see change happen? There's got to be a better way.

An independent corrections Ombudsman could be the start towards a better way.

The dehumanization of our adults in custody and their friends and families has a tremendous impact on us all. If Oregon wants to help correct the behaviors of those people in their custody then it needs to walk the talk and act respectfully. An Ombudsman can help hold the DOC accountable to this higher ideal.

Please support the funding of SB 207.

Thank you.
Jack Gray