



Legislative Testimony

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

February 9, 2021

The Honorable Janelle Bynum, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary

Re: House Bill 2912

Chair Bynum and members of the committee, my name is Nathaline Frener, and I serve as the Assistant Director of the Correctional Services Division for the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC). I am providing written testimony on the anticipated impacts of HB 2912 as it relates to the department.

What the Bill Does:

HB 2912 extends the sunset of the Oregon Justice Resource Center's (OJRC) program to continue the legal services pilot program for women at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility (CCCF) in Wilsonville. It appropriates an \$800,000 grant to OJRC to continue funding the program through the end of the 2021-2023 biennium. The purpose of the program is to assist adults in custody (AICs) to successfully re-enter and reintegrate into local communities. The expressed intent of the program is to help individuals releasing resolve and navigate civil legal needs while reducing their vulnerability to domestic violence and increase their ability to obtain employment, housing services, and other benefits.

Background Information:

DOC provides legal libraries, staff-arranged attorney/AIC client telephone calls, and other resources and supplies at each correctional facility to adequately assure access to the courts. In accordance with [Oregon Administrative Rule 291-139](#), priority access to legal library resources is given to AICs raising a legal challenge to their conviction, sentence, or conditions of confinement. Generally, legal counsel is assigned to AICs raising such legal challenges. With limited exception, DOC lacks the resources to prioritize the civil legal matters which are the expressed focus of the pilot program.

Potential Impacts:

Should this legislation pass, DOC would look to OJRC for continued collaboration to avoid duplication of efforts and unnecessary expenditures for those services already provided by DOC. For example, DOC provides a full range of transition classes to AICs, and successfully provides important documents for re-entry such as identification, social security cards, and birth certificates. Over 70 percent of people leave DOC custody with both a birth certificate and social security card as a result of DOC policy implementation. However, OJRC's facilitation on the more complicated remaining 30 percent in need of other documentation would be beneficial to releasing AICs.

Should HB 2912 pass, OJRC attorneys would be able to access their clients through the same methods available to all attorneys: professional in-person visits, staff-arranged phone calls, and the United States Postal Service (USPS). From my conversations with OJRC, I understand these methods meet their needs and the professional visit process is a more efficient way for them to see their clients; even more so than the pre-pandemic process.

The department does not currently track the specific impacts unresolved civil legal matters have on women's re-entry and reintegration. These barriers were raised by the independent HerStory Oregon Survey conducted by OJRC in partnership with Portland State University. This pilot will likely improve DOC's ability to demonstrate data-driven results. We are optimistic the required evaluation will reflect DOC's ability to provide qualitative analysis of the pilot's success, numbers served, and legal matters resolved.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Submitted by:

Oregon Department of Corrections

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