



February 8th 2022

To: Senate Committee On Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation

RE: Oregon Senate Bill 1568- Early Compassionate Medical Release

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

My name is Samantha Hernandez and I am writing on behalf of Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility (OPSR) to support SB 1568. Guided by the values and expertise of medicine and public health, OPSR works to protect human life from the gravest threats to health and survival. We are an organization of over 2,800 health professionals and public health advocates statewide working collaboratively with community partners to educate and advocate for societal and policy change that protects human health.

The current process of early compassionate medical release is inefficient. Many loved ones of Adults in Custody (AICs) have expressed that the current process of early compassionate medical release is confusing, overly complicated, and vague. SB 1568 proposes a more efficient, accessible, and transparent early compassionate medical release process. It establishes a Medical Release Advisory Committee (MRAC) within the State Board of Parole and Post-Prison Supervision. The MRAC will consist of 7 to 13 licensed medical professionals in charge of reviewing applications for release recommendations solely and objectively from a medical and public health perspective. SB 1568 is innovative legislation and such an important function to a compassionate release process. It ensures early compassionate medical release assessments are made with an informed and objective medical health perspective, a perspective that the current early compassionate release process does not consider at all. An effective compassionate medical release process guided by health expertise is needed now more than ever as the COVID-19 pandemic continues and Oregon prison facilities struggle to protect medically vulnerable AICs from the virus.

SB 1568 creates a more accessible application process for early compassionate

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Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility

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medical release by ensuring that application forms are made available to all AICs in department facilities. SB 1568 also creates a more accessible transition process with the creation of a release navigator position. AICs who are granted early compassionate medical release are assigned a release navigator to assist the AIC with reentry planning, obtaining housing and medical care, as well as overall continuity of care in the community.

Moreover, SB 1568 includes proposed measures that ensure the early compassionate medical release of AICs will not result in the endangerment of the public or cause community safety issues. The board will not accept the MRAC recommendation if clear and convincing evidence shows the AIC applying for early compassionate release will pose a danger to the safety of an individual or the public and the danger outweighs any compassionate reasons for release.

All human beings have dignity and value, including Adults in Custody, and for this reason, deserve compassionate and quality healthcare. Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility urges the committee to vote “YES” on SB 1568.

Thank you,

Samantha Hernandez

Climate Justice Organizer

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