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Dear Co-Chairs Sollman, Evans and members of the Ways and Means Public Safety Sub-Committee,

I have had the opportunity to visit and speak with multiple staff of the MacLaren and Eastern Oregon Youth Correctional Facilities.

I learned about the critical thinking and evidence-based practices that go into helping the youth in custody learn and understand their mindsets and behaviors. I was truly impressed and appreciative that the OYA contemplates what works to help these youth and how to then implement the best practices across all levels of OYA staff.

I was particularly impressed hearing from Eastern Oregon OYA staff who shared how they hold themselves to a standard of treating their colleagues as well as the youth in custody with respect, dignity, and accountability -- just as what was being asked of the youth in custody.

I believe these youth can grow and change and that this kind of consistency in modeling respectful behavior is integral to such change.

I was glad to read that the Governor's budget for the OYA sufficiently funds the OYA work to continue their efforts with these young men and women.

I believe that funding the OYA budget with our public dollars is entirely worthwhile; these funds are an investment in our communities as well as an investment in these youth.

Thank you for listening and your work each day in the legislature.

Thank you,
Kelley Whitmore