



March 13, 2022

To: Senate Healthcare Committee

RE: Support Compassionate Medical Release, SB 520

Senate Committee on Health Care

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden, and members of the Senate Committee On Health Care: For the record my name is Daysi Bedolla Sotelo and I am here to testify on behalf of the Oregon Health Equity Alliance (OHEA) as their Policy and Advocacy Strategist, in support of Senate Bill 520- Early Compassionate Medical Release.

OHEA is a people of color-led collaborative, organized to center and uplift the wisdom of our communities of color through racial justice informed health equity policies and practices as part of the movement to dismantle white supremacy and shift the imbalance of power. OHEA serves Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties as one of ten regional health equity coalitions across Oregon.

Accordingly, we strongly support Compassionate Medical Release SB 520, which will help incarcerated Oregonians that are sick or dying, have an opportunity to be safely and humanely released to get the care they need at home with their loved ones.

Since 2015, Oregon has had the fourth-largest aging prison population in the country. Under current state medical release laws, people die awaiting a decision on their medical release application than are actually released. Compassionate Medical Release reform will do the following:

- Place decisions about release in the hands of medical professionals
- Expand medical eligibility to those who have serious health issues and ailments
- Provide support and resources to applicants during the process

From 2013 to 2020, only nine out of 131 adults in custody with severe medical conditions were able to apply for and be granted compassionate medical release. Over those seven years, 11 imprisoned people died while waiting for a decision.

Individuals who qualified under Senate Bill 520 have limited mobility, and are incarcerated fighting for their lives in conditions that directly have an impact on their health. It is only fair that they are released to their loved ones and have a chance at living their last days in the healthier conditions available to them.

Oregon advocates and lawmakers have an opportunity to provide a path to provide compassionate care for some of our most vulnerable populations, people in prison with serious

underlying, debilitating medical conditions which is, at its core, a human rights and health equity issue. With this, OHEA strongly urges you to pass SB 520 out of the committee.

Thank you for your consideration.

Daysi Bedolla Sotelo
Policy and Advocacy Strategist, Oregon Health Equity Alliance (OHEA)