



**Oregon Crime Victims Law Center**

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**Opposition to SB 1027**  
**March 23, 2023**  
**Senate Committee on Judiciary**

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee:

The National Crime Victim Law Institute and the Oregon Crime Victims Law Center jointly submit this letter in opposition to SB 1027. NCVLI is a nonprofit legal advocacy and educational organization that supports victims' rights in state, federal and military tribunals of Oregon and nationally. OCVLC is a nonprofit organization that provides free legal representation to crime victims throughout Oregon. OCVLC attorneys and advocates assist victims with asserting and seeking enforcement of their constitutional and statutory rights in the criminal justice system. Attorneys with both organizations represent or support victims after conviction, including in hearings before the Board of Parole and Post-Prison Supervision. At these hearings, the Oregon Constitution guarantees victims a number of important rights, including the right to protection throughout the criminal justice process and the right to be heard. SB 1027 would deprive victims of these rights through the elimination of the Exit Interview for adults in custody who have been sentenced to life in prison for aggravated murder and murder.

SB 1027 would present a significant change to the process of parole in Oregon. Currently, at a murder review hearing the Parole Board must determine whether an inmate is capable of rehabilitation within a reasonable period of time. The standard as defined does not require a finding of rehabilitation, or an inquiry into whether the community and the victims would be safe if the inmate were released – only whether the inmate is *capable* of rehabilitation at some point in the future. If the Board finds an inmate capable of rehabilitation, a release date is set, before which an Exit Interview is held. It is at an Exit Interview that the essential inquiry into the safety of the community and the victims is held and a psychological evaluation of the inmate is considered. SB 1027 eliminates this important step in the process, mandating that if the Board finds an inmate capable of rehabilitation, a release date must be set within 60 days. There is no requirement that a psychological evaluation be conducted and no inquiry into the safety of the victims or the community. The process as described under SB 1027 would not require a finding of actual rehabilitation, only the possibility of such.

For many victims the right to be heard at parole hearings is critical for a number of reasons: it's a chance to have their voices heard regarding the release of the person who harmed them, to discuss their concerns regarding their personal safety, and a chance to describe what justice in the case means to them. Surviving family members of murder victims frequently take part in parole hearings for these reasons, sometimes appearing before the Oregon Board of Parole and Post-Prison Supervision every two years, despite the hardships this may present. Victims rely on the process as it currently stands – a murder review hearing, with the potential for a later Exit Interview. SB 1027 would change this system significantly, a change that would weaken victims' trust in the system and likely cause additional

trauma in an already fraught process. Further, eliminating the Exit Interview from the parole process in these cases denies victims the “meaningful role” promised by the Constitution by removing the consideration of community and victim safety. It denies victims the chance to be heard before an inmate’s release, when there is a psychological evaluation available that provides insight into whether an inmate really is rehabilitated, and when the Board must evaluate whether the victim and the community will be safe. The Oregon Constitution provides victims with these rights to ensure that the voices of those who have been most harmed will be heard and considered with the weight they deserve. SB 1027 deprives victims of these rights. The National Crime Victim Law Institute and the Oregon Crime Victims Law Center oppose SB 1027.

Thank you for your consideration.

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