

Date: March 23, 2023

To: Senate Committee on Judiciary

From: Bobbin Singh, Executive Director, Oregon Justice Resource Center

Re: Victims in Support of SB 1027

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

The Oregon Justice Resource Center submits the enclosed testimony on behalf of victim family members. While victims all share a common identity in experiencing harm or offense, the way they see and feel about defendants and the criminal legal system are as varied as they are. The testimony enclosed are a sample of the voices from the victim community who support parole reform and SB 1027.

The three victim family members have submitted their testimony anonymously to protect their privacy, dignity, and further traumatization of having the facts of their tragedies publicized. Additionally, they also submit their testimony anonymously to protect the identities of the AICs to prevent public officials, stakeholders, and media from sensationalizing or vilifying the AICs for political purposes. This is not a zero-sum game. Creating a more credible system and that allows for greater transparency, predictability, and consistency is a message victims and victim family members have communicated to us as paramount to them.

We hope that you will read the enclosed testimony and take with great care their messages on behalf of their community.

Respectfully,



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March 21, 2023.

**RE: Senate Bill (SB) 1027
Public Hearing 3/23/2023**

Members of the Senate Judiciary:

My family and I were the victims of a murder committed by my nephew against his parents. I am writing in support of proposed Senate Bill (SB) 1027, which protects victims from having to suffer multiple hearings discussing the crimes an offender has committed. I also support the goal of SB 1027 to guarantee that the sentence that is pronounced in court is the sentence an offender will actually serve.

In the 1990s, my nephew took the life of a family member. The crime devastated us all. As we proceeded to trial my nephew accepted a plea agreement to prevent further hardship on us all and to take responsibility for his actions. As explained to us by the district attorney, the sentence my nephew received only required he serve 25 years in prison. That was not true.

After he was incarcerated for a number of years, in 2000, we learned that the legislature had made it necessary for him to prove his reformation to the board of parole before his release. No one had told us that such a process would be required, including the district attorney. No one told us that we would have to attend such a process and listen to the painful details of the crimes before our nephew could be release from prison. We understood at the time of his sentence that parole was a relic of the past.

Our nephew has explained that under the new parole process he would be required to undergo three public hearings before being released and that each hearing required him to talk about his crime. We do not see why that is necessary, especially since the law didn't require that when he was sentenced. When a person accepts responsibility for their crimes and the court sentences them for those crimes, what need is there to relive the horrible facts of the crime?

Our family would ask that you not require we endure such hardships. It is hard enough to have to live with the terrible tragedy that our nephew caused. Listening to district attorneys and parole board members talk about our loved ones not once, not twice, but in three separate hearing just causes us unnecessary pain and suffering. Please really think about that harm and how it can be lessened in passing SB 1027. One hearing is enough for any victim of a crime to have to go through.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Support for SB 1027

Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am a victim family member. I support SB 1027.

Victims are necessarily involved in parole hearings, whether or not they want to be. These hearings can feel like aftershocks, where not as much damage is done as the first big one, but negative effects are nevertheless experienced. As a crime victim, these are the three things most important to me.

1. My health and well being
2. My safety
3. My privacy

It is far less important to me that the perpetrator “pays” because his suffering cannot and does not heal my hurt. People venerate the idea of vengeance, but I’m telling you first-hand, it does NOT make the victim feel better. In fact, for those like me, it compounds the pain.

1. To protect my well being, I need to limit and contain the amount of time spent thinking, hearing, and reading about the perpetrator and the crime.
2. To feel safe, I need to clearly understand the criteria the parole board uses in determining whether he will commit another crime. How do they decide whether he’s still a danger? Right now, I really don’t know.
3. To protect my privacy, I need to limit my exposure to the various entities involved in the parole process, including media.

Knowing this, would you still subject me to a black box process with an unpredictable outcome, not once, but three times?

If the parole board uses clear, unbiased, standardized criteria and determines that he is no longer a threat, I will feel more confident than I currently do that I, and my community, will be safe upon his release. If there is a pre-determined amount of time from the hearing to the release, I can make plans for self-care well in advance allowing me to protect my well-being, safety, and privacy with notice.

Please keep my voice in mind when voting on the parole board process. Leaving things the way they are will tell me, and those like me, that the perpetrator is more deserving of your consideration than we are.

March 21, 2023.

Re: SB 1027 Support

Members of the Senate Judiciary:

My family and I were the victims of a murder, and the offenders will be seeing the parole board for the possibility of release. **I am writing in support of SB 1027.**

The current parole hearing process involves multiple hearings in which victims, if we participate, will have to again and again return to that time, 25+ years ago, when our family suffered such devastating loss. The process proposed by this bill is far more humane for victims because it changes the process to involve only one hearing before the parole board.

The one hearing provided for in SB 1027 requires the offender to satisfy a comprehensive set of criteria. This should provide the parole board with more than enough information to determine whether the offender will be safe in the community.

I do not believe that a multiple hearing process makes me, my family, or the community safer. I believe that the multiple hearing process creates more harm. SB 1027 provides victims with a lot more clarity and predictability. It helps us to better prepare ourselves for the offender's release.

I also ask you to consider cases like my family's, in which more than one offender will be going through the parole hearing process. Under the current system, with the multiple hearings being set at unpredictable times, our lives will be greatly and unnecessarily disrupted.

Please consider the perspective of victims who are left to go through this process and support SB 1027.

Thank you.