

BENJAMIN HAILE
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March 24, 2023

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

My name is Benjamin Haile. I have lived in Portland, Oregon for 23 years, and I have seen too many children torn away from their mothers by long prison sentences for convictions related to domestic violence.

Thank you for giving your attention to a bill that can fix this terrible pattern of misguided incarceration. I am writing in strong support of SB 1070.

Oregon's sentencing laws do not adequately allow judges to consider the impact of domestic violence on survivors. This results in unjust and excessively long terms in prison. Survivors are repeatedly retraumatized by the prison environment. Even worse, there are few or no programs or services in prison to address their histories of abuse.

More than a third of all women experience domestic violence. For too many this victimization is a pathway to incarceration. They are arrested and prosecuted for acts like protecting themselves or their children, fighting back or trying to escape from the abuser, or stealing out of financial need.

Our society suffers from the financial and emotional costs of imprisoning survivors of domestic violence. The harm to the children of people serving long prison sentences is tragic and echoes forward generation to generation. The financial cost to the state for operating the prisons that hold the survivors is huge. Too much of that money comes out of the budget for schools. I'm grateful that a solution to this absurd spiral of brutality and wasted resources could be on the horizon with SB 1070.

The people of Oregon want legislation that will allow judges to consider the impact of domestic violence on the conduct of the person convicted of a crime.

Oregonians want judges to be able to impose a lesser sentence when surviving domestic violence was a contributing factor to a person's behavior that culminated in being convicted of a crime and the presumptive or mandatory sentence would be unreasonably harsh. We also want the Department of Corrections provide better programs and support for domestic violence survivors so that they can return to the community and to their families healthy, safe, and with good strategies for overcoming the risk of domestic violence.

Please pass SB 1070.

Thank you for your attention to this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Benjamin Haile". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "B".