



ECUMENICAL MINISTRIES

— OF OREGON —

February 6, 2024

RE: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1560, Compassionate Medical Release Reform

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

My name is Lorena Ambriz and I am grateful for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) in support of Compassionate Medical Release Reform, Senate Bill 1560. EMO is a statewide association of faith partners working together to improve the lives of Oregonians through public policy advocacy, direct service programs, creation justice, and interreligious education and dialogue. As an organization that is dedicated to civil and religious freedom, and social and political equality, **we strongly support reforming our compassionate medical release process through Senate Bill 1560.**

Senate Bill 1560 would establish a legislative task force to research and analyze the barriers, gaps, and needs of adults in custody who are aging, dying, and medically infirmed in prison. Oregon has the fourth-largest aging prison population in the country, a population which is prone to medical complications. From 2013 to 2021, 166 adults in custody with severe medical conditions applied for compassionate medical release. Of those applicants, only 12 were able to complete the process and were granted release. In that same period, 11 applicants passed away while waiting for an outcome. It is evident Oregon's current medical release system lacks the infrastructure and staff to provide adequate health care to those in custody with severe medical conditions.

It is our hope that the information gathered through the task force will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our current system. We hope this task force will explore the possibility of a) placing medical release decisions in the hands of medical professionals, b) expanding the medical release eligibility criteria, and c) providing those seeking medical release with support and resources during the application process.

Our decisions and actions at EMO are made with the vision of a world free from injustice, exploitation, and human deprivation. For these reasons, **we believe every incarcerated Oregonian who is sick or dying should have the opportunity to be safely and humanely released to get the care they need at home with their loved ones. EMO urges your support on Senate Bill 1560, and we ask you to pass it out of committee.**

Thank you,
Lorena Ambriz
Public Policy Associate
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon