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To whomever it may concern,

We are all attorneys who are regularly appointed by the Oregon Parole Board to represent AICs at Murder Review and Exit Interview hearings. Most of us have been working regularly on parole hearings for the last several years and we are experienced in working with prisoners to prepare them and help them present their cases to the Board

There is never a case that does not involve a multitude of difficult and painful facts that an AIC must be able to discuss in intimate and honest detail. To convince the Board of their suitability to return to the community, AICs must delve deep into their past failings and their rehabilitation which includes discussing private and deeply shameful things – such as childhood abuse, their own history of violence both as offender and victim, their sexual history, their disciplinary record in prison, their physical and mental health and often their personal family dynamics.

A parole hearing is always a challenging undertaking for both prisoner and their lawyer. It requires months of preparation and discussion to build trust. As counsel, we must encourage them to be open in ways that surviving in prison has taught them not to be.

We can only imagine what a chilling effect it would have on this process if the Board was mandated to video record hearings and make them available to the general public. We cannot imagine how intimidating it would be to the AICs. It would make it far harder for them to discuss intimate issues in such a public way with the fear that their admissions could be used against them by anyone in the future for any conceivable reason.

We also think that we would also be putting ourselves at unnecessary risk for abuse from members of the public. We have already received unpleasant letters and death threats in the past and can only imagine how much they would increase once there was a face put to our names.

We urge the legislature to exempt Parole Board hearings from the video recording requirements so as to protect the integrity of the process and the safety of the people involved.

Yours Sincerely,

Venetia Mayhew, Mieke De Vrind, Kate Edwards, Christian Eickelberg, Brittany Hill, Jody Davis and Katy Morris