

SB 1179 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Judiciary

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Meeting Dates: 3/18

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure requires the sentencing court to consider as mitigation evidence whether a defendant was subjected to domestic abuse that was ongoing when the defendant's criminal behavior occurred and that it was contributing factor in criminal behavior. It further provides that, if established by a preponderance of the evidence, such evidence constitutes substantial and compelling reasons justifying downward departure sentence. It authorizes a court to impose a lesser sentence even if the sentence is mandatory or otherwise required by law. The measure creates a procedure for a person currently serving sentence to petition the court for resentencing if the person was subjected to domestic abuse that was a contributing factor in their criminal behavior. The procedure requires the petition for resentencing under this provision to be filed in the circuit court in which the person was originally convicted and sentenced and requires the court to issue an order granting or denying a petition within 30 days of the date the petition is filed or the petition shall be deemed granted. Finally, the measure establishes the Task Force on Services and Support for Incarcerated Domestic Violence Survivors. Takes effect on 91st day following adjournment sine die.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Oregon criminal statutes establish mandatory minimum sentences a court is required to impose based on the crime of conviction and a defendant's criminal history. An example of these types of sentences are those enacted by the Ballot Measure 11 initiative, passed by Oregon voters in 1994, requiring mandatory minimum sentences for certain crimes codified as ORS 137.700 through 137.712.

Under ORS 137.080, after a plea or verdict of guilty, in a case where the court has discretion as to the extent of the punishment to be inflicted, the court may or, in some circumstances, is required, to consider certain factors in aggravation or mitigation of the punishment. However, a court may not consider mitigation evidence when imposing sentence for a crime that carries a statutory mandatory minimum similar to those cited above.

Senate bill 1179 would authorize a court to impose a lesser sentence even if sentence is mandatory or otherwise required by law if the court finds by a preponderance of the evidence that the defendant was subjected to domestic abuse that was ongoing at the time a defendant's criminal behavior occurred and was a contributing factor in the criminal behavior as outlined by the measure. The measure would also create a procedure by which person currently serving a sentence may petition the court for resentencing if person was subjected to domestic abuse that was a contributing factor in criminal behavior. In addition, the measure establishes a Task Force on Services and Support for Incarcerated Domestic Violence Survivors.