

Submitter: Heather Lagaso
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Public Safety
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5004

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 5004, which provides essential funding to the Oregon Department of Corrections for the 2025-2027 biennium. This funding is critical to ensuring that correctional facilities remain safe, effective, and able to provide transformative programs that change lives and reduce recidivism.

The programs within our correctional system are not just about incarceration—they are about rehabilitation. They teach Adults in Custody (AICs) how to set and respect boundaries, make positive life choices, and build the skills necessary to support themselves upon release. These programs provide education, vocational training, and life skills that give AICs the tools to reintegrate successfully into society.

Beyond personal growth, these programs instill a sense of purpose by emphasizing the value of community service and giving back. Many AICs leave the system not just with a new outlook on life, but with a deep commitment to contributing positively to their communities. This is the kind of change that benefits all Oregonians, reducing repeat offenses and making our communities safer.

However, staffing shortages within our correctional facilities threaten the effectiveness of these programs and the safety of both staff and AICs. Understaffing leads to increased stress on existing personnel, limits access to educational and rehabilitation programs, and compromises security. Adequate funding is necessary to attract and retain qualified staff who can provide the guidance and structure needed for these programs to thrive.

House Bill 5004 is not just a budget bill—it is an investment in public safety, rehabilitation, and the future of those who will eventually return to our communities. I urge you and your colleagues to support this critical funding to ensure these life-changing programs continue and that Oregon's correctional system remains effective and safe for all.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Heather Lagaso