Testimony in support of IT modernization funding for the Oregon Department of Corrections

Good morning everyone. Chairs Broadman, Evans, members of the committee A pleasure to be here with you all.

My name is Evan Green-Lowe. I lead the State Partnerships team at a technology non-profit called Recidiviz. Recidiviz, is about 100 former software engineers from top companies like Google and Apple who are specifically dedicated to serving Departments of Corrections across America. We've had the good fortune to work in 20 states across America, including, over these last 2 years, the Oregon Department of Corrections.

You've spent much of the last few days listening to Director Reese, Deputy Director Steward, Assistant Directors Stromberg, Highberger and others. They've told you about the essential work of over 4,000 employees, and the impact their work has on the citizens of Oregon.

My goal today is to offer just a few words that can shine a light on the way that focused investments in IT modernization can be **incredibly high bang for buck,** a particularly strong form of leverage for achieving the department's goals.

Hardware investments are very costly - as you've heard replacing the Oregon State Penitentiary could run north of $600 million dollars. In contrast, the return on investment from **software** is pretty incredible. For less than 1 one-hundredth the cost, for $5.6 million, Oregon can replace the software that guides the effective, efficient operations not of one prison, but all other 11 state facilities and all 36 counties. It's the deal of a lifetime!

Good correctional management, at its core, is about ensuring the right people are in the right place at the right time. Modern software is incredibly well-suited to achieve this. We've seen this work in over a dozen other states.

I'll share an imperfect analogy about the merits of modernization.

Oregon has 11,000 prison beds. Picture a 3 x 3 tic-tac-toe board. Now picture an 11,000 by 11,000 square grid of tic-tac-toe. This visual is representative of which person needs to be in which of the **wonderful programs you've been hearing about** to get what support at what time. It's a problem humans will always be imperfect at and that modern software is excellent at.

Oregon has the ability to identify substance use needs, treatment needs, educational opportunities. It can enable re-entry support that keeps AICs from coming back. It just can't do it with technology that is occasionally as old as I am.

For $5.6 million in a $2.6 billion budget, you need a 0.2% improvement in cost-efficiency.

We've seen how the proper tech investments of a similar size have helped states deliver this value dozens of times over.

Good software supports staff retention, recidivism reduction, and effective programming allocation. It is well worth it and we're very excited to see what ODOC will be able to achieve with this funding.

Thank you.

Evan Green-Lowe
Director of State Partnerships, Recidiviz