

March 13, 2025

Senator Deb Patterson, Chair

Senator Cedric Hayden, Vice Chair

Senate Health Care Committee

RE: Support SB 24-1

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden and Members of the Senate Health Care Committee,

my name is Dr. Lauren Prewitt. I represent the physicians who work for Oregon Department of Corrections, AFSCME Local # 200 and I am here in support of HB24.

I have been working with underserved, marginalized populations for the last 20 years, but I found my true professional home at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility. Many patients have long histories of mental illness, homelessness, drug addiction, alcohol abuse, unplanned pregnancies, and domestic violence. We have many patients with Hepatitis C, Syphilis, and Opioid Use Disorder. I provide prenatal and postpartum care for women who come to Coffee Creek already pregnant. My responsibilities have been to perform intake history and physicals, well woman exams, cancer screening exams for transgender and gender non-conforming patients, treatment of STDs, cervical dysplasia. I also provide reproductive health education and parole contraception. I believe helping incarcerated women take care of their own bodies is an invaluable investment as these women re-integrate into society and care for their own families and friends.

When I arrived at Coffee Creek three years ago, there were no medical assistants. In order to do my job, as a doctor, I was responsible for stocking my own exam rooms, turning over rooms between patients, labeling my own pathology specimens, and setting up and breaking down my room after procedures. In fact, there is no position description for Medical Assistant in the State data bank. At this point in time, we are splitting the funding for RN positions, to hire Medical Assistants to keep our clinic running smoothly. This is only one example of why a staffing audit would help us make really impactful changes in our workplace efficiency.

Over the last 3 years, I worked tirelessly building the first AFSCME Correctional Physician's Union. While almost all other state employees have been unionized for decades, the physicians working at Oregon Department of Corrections (ODOC) have been at-will employees who were fired if they threatened the status-quo. Until July 1st of 2024, We were unable to take any strong stand in advocacy for our own workplace conditions or our patient population.

In the last 8 months, having Union protections, I went on record as a whistle-blower in the effort to uncover deeply rooted patterns of deliberate indifference and misuse of taxpayer funds within DOC. These investigations lead to an overhaul in ODOC health services leadership.

Due to high turnover and high utilization of contract nurse and provider staffing, we struggle to maintain normalcy. I have been at Coffee Creek for three years, and I have more seniority than 50% of the employees. Our institutional memory is about three months long. In this community of patients, physicians, nurses, support staff, managers, and correctional officers, I have leveraged my position as an OB/Gyn to advocate for gender responsive and trauma informed healthcare. It has not been without personal and professional risk. Today, I am asking you to match my level of commitment by supporting the dash one amendments to SB24.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill today. I am happy to answer any questions.

Dr. Lauren Prewitt  
AFSCME Local # 200