

Testimony in Support of HB 3078

Submitted to the House Committee on Judiciary

April 12, 2017

Dear Chair Barker and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

For the record, my name is Elizabeth Hacker.

Earlier this month, I was with my oldest daughter when we learned that she was accepted to Stanford University. It was one of the most joyous moments of my life, not just because she had turned her dream into a reality, but because I had just been reunited with her and my other children after two and a half years of being in and out of jail.

My history is not much different from many women's in Oregon. As a young woman, I got myself caught up in a cycle that included abusive relationships and poor choices that eventually led to my addiction. By the time I was 30, I was in a survival mode that felt bigger than me. Also like many women in Oregon, it was a cycle that led to my incarceration.

I don't make excuses for myself. I'm sober now, and a part of my recovery involves taking responsibility for the harm that I've caused, and I work at that every day. At the same time, another part of my recovery involves learning to accept the parts of my past where I was a victim of abuse and of addiction. The bottom line was that I needed help.

When I was 23, I spent three months working as a missionary in Africa. We were there to help people find faith, but their conditions were too dire for that. They were hungry, they were unsheltered, and they were very sick, many of them with AIDS. It was obvious that they needed basic services and healing before they could think beyond their survival modes, so we delivered that for them. We provided housing. We provided schooling. We provided healthcare. Most importantly, we provided the space for them to hope and for them to find God. It was a very hard and emotional three months for me, but it taught me a profound lesson – the heart of which is at the heart of the Safety and Savings Act: people need basic healing before they can thrive.

As of last week, I'm one year clean, and I only reached that milestone because I had the resources to upright my life, to get out of a cycle of abusive relationships, to be a better mother to my four amazing children, and to have a job that allowed me to take my family out to dinner to celebrate Stanford.

I feel lucky to have had the treatment and services that I needed, but I'm not more special than anyone else I got to know in jail. Other women have children and families and hopes and dreams. Other women need help. I urge you to support those families by supporting HB 3078.