

Rep. Carla C. Piluso, House District 50, Gresham
Testimony in support of HB 3078 for House Rules Committee
May 25, 2017

Chair Williamson, members of the Committee, for the record, my name is Carla Piluso and I represent House District 50 in Gresham.

As many of you know, I've spent the last several months delving into the women's prison population crisis, along with Sen. Winters, to see what caused it and how we can avoid spending millions on a new prison for women. While we've made some progress with work release programs, as it stands now, our prison for women is still over capacity and we are using more than 120 temporary and emergency beds in Coffee Creek alone. This puts everyone in that prison, workers and prisoners, in a terrible position.

As you also know, I come to this issue as a former Chief of Police who spent 30 years in law enforcement. Clearly, I believe in holding people accountable when they make bad choices. I also know that the best public safety outcomes are achieved when we use our common sense and evidence-based approaches and that this bill will benefit not just those being convicted but also correctional officers and victims. Community safety always has been and will continue to be my top priority.

When I arrested women with their children watching, I knew I was altering their lives forever. Many of these mothers were in domestic violence situations or struggling with addiction or mental illness. It pains an officer deeply to find out that our system isn't addressing the underlying problem; that you go back to arrest the same woman over and over, or even worse, their children 10 years later.

Many in the law enforcement community in Oregon are already leading the way toward a smarter approach. Marion County has a successful program that diverts people for addiction-driven crime that is being replicated in Lane and Klamath Counties. Multnomah is launching a Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion program that sends people to treatment and services instead of prison. Justice Reinvestment programs across the state are also making an impact. But these pockets of great work are not enough to address the crisis we are in.

DOC has already cut 144 treatment beds and Justice Reinvestment and Community Corrections programs are at risk of being cut – all in order to fund expensive, lengthy prison stays. The 2008 law that created longer mandatory minimum sentences for addiction-driven drug and property crime was meant to go after big time drug kingpins, but it is scooping up low level addicts and it is costing taxpayers *millions* to house, not rehabilitate, them. Especially when faced with a \$1.5 billion budget deficit, we need to ensure we are investing taxpayer dollars in what works to address the root causes of addiction-driven crime, reduce recidivism and future crime, and keep our communities safe.

Thank you for your time and consideration of HB 3078.