

May 24, 2017

The Honorable Chair Williamson  
Chair, House Rules Committee  
900 Court St NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Williamson and Members of the Committee,

The Oregon Women's Health and Wellness Alliance (OWHWA) is a group of legislators, health care personnel, state and local agency staff and citizen advocates dedicated to promoting the health, safety and economic well-being of women. The Co-Chairs of the OWHWA support HB 3078 and ask for your thoughtful consideration of this legislation.

HB 3078, known as the Safety and Savings Act, realigns drug and property crime laws to avoid unnecessary incarceration in Oregon, and will hopefully mitigate the need to open an additional women's prison in our state. The bill re-directs funding towards supervision, mental health and addiction services which will in turn reduce recidivism and re-entry rates. Oregon's stringent sentencing laws for drug and property crimes disproportionately affect women. In 2015, seventy percent of women in prison were incarcerated for drug and property crimes. From 2007 to 2015, the number of incarcerated women increased by twenty-two percent. Many of these women are mothers, and these exaggerated sentences not only impact women, but have devastating impacts on the lives of their children and families as well.

In addition, the decrease in sentencing of drug and property crimes will generate savings for our state. That savings could be used to better fund social services and programs that support vulnerable Oregonians, including victim services, addiction and mental health treatment, justice reinvestment programs, and family sentencing alternatives.

HB 3078 will positively impact the lives of women and families by providing wrap-around services they need to thrive. When we support families and keep parents out of prison, we help interrupt the intergenerational cycle of incarceration and poverty, and provide brighter futures for Oregon's children. We encourage your support for HB 3078.

Sincerely,

The OWHWA Co-Chairs:



Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward



Representative Karin Power



Senator Kathleen Taylor



Representative Alissa Keny-Guyer