

# CRIME VICTIMS UNITED

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To: Honorable Jennifer Williamson, Chair  
House Rules Committee Members  
From: Steve Doell, President, Crime Victims United  
Date: May 25, 2017  
Re: HB 3078-2

Good afternoon, Chair Williamson, Vice-Chairs McLane and Rayfield, members of the committee. My name is Steve Doell and I am president of Crime Victims United. Crime Victims United strongly opposes HB 3078 and the proposed dash-2 amendments.

I first testified on this bill on April 12th in the House Judiciary committee. Much like today, prior to my turn to speak, I heard over and over again that we are facing a crisis at Coffee Creek, Oregon's only women's prison. Absent immediate reductions in sentences and expansions of back end cuts the prison will burst at the seams.

It is simply not the case. My last testimony was ten days after the April Prison Forecast. I've submitted that forecast to the committee administrator and it should be available on OLIS. I suggest you turn to page 9 and look at the highlighted section. Oregon's non-partisan Prison Forecasting Committee is estimating 11 additional female inmates over the next decade. Yes, eleven. That's one new bed per year over a ten-year period.

The notion we are on the cusp of opening a women's prison is a narrative that is not supported by the facts. It is being leveraged to achieve an ideological end – cutting sentences. And not just cutting women's sentences, but cutting sentences for hundreds, if not thousands, of male offenders. What's more, in this case, it cuts sentences that were overwhelmingly approved by Oregon voters. Voters who were tired of being victimized. Tired of walking to work or losing their job because they could not afford to replace their stolen car. Tired of losing their savings and their credit because of identity thieves. Tired of being afraid that the burglar will be back for a second bite of the apple, and the next time the kids or grandmother may be home.

For nearly 25 years I have committed my life to protecting victims. Victims of violent crime. Victims of property crime. All victims. I do it because I know that crime puts a tremendous burden on victims and their families. It is frequently financially devastating. It is often emotionally shattering. In some cases, far more frequently than you think, it causes victims to enter a life-altering downward spiral that leads to divorce, drugs or even death. It touches every victim differently, but it touches them all.

These days I rarely come to Salem. When I do, however, I am shocked by what I see and hear. It is the offenders who are now viewed as victims. They can't get housing. They can't find jobs. They lose custody of their children. They are addicts. They need certificates of good standing. They need a bill of rights. They need to get out of prison early.

*"To promote a balanced criminal justice system through public awareness and legislative action"*

Is it hard for offenders to get back on track? I'm sure it is. But I promise you it is no harder than it is for many innocent victims to pick up the pieces of their lives. And its not just victims of violent crime, it is victims of all crime.

If you are thinking about voting yes on this bill I would ask you to take one simple step before you do. Spend a day at the crime victims' assistance office of your local district attorney. Talk to the victims. Ask them about their families. Ask them about the challenges they face. Ask them what they've gone through. Spend time with them.

Should we help offenders get on the right path? Absolutely. But not at the expense of more victims. And that is where this bill does not measure up.

Removing or limiting law enforcement's tools to incarcerate career criminals for sufficient periods to either participate in in-custody treatment programs or age out of criminal behavior is inappropriate and dangerous. Cutting sentences on the back end through programs such as expanded transitional leave is dishonest to the public and dismissive of the demands of Oregon voters.

This is an ideological bill built on the false narrative of a prison crisis. If you don't see through it, the voters will.

Crime Victims United urges you to oppose HB 3078.