



SIX SOLUTIONS TO AVOID OPENING OSP-MINIMUM

OREGON CAN AVOID SPENDING MILLIONS OF DOLLARS ON PRISON BED EXPANSION WITHOUT COMPROMISING PUBLIC SAFETY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PORTLAND, Oregon – Oregon is set to spend millions of dollars on opening space at Oregon State Penitentiary – Minimum (OSP-M) to accommodate the continued growth in its women’s prison population. As of September, 2016, there were 1305 women incarcerated at what is currently Oregon’s only women’s prison, Coffee Creek Correctional Facility (CCCF) in Wilsonville. This is higher than the maximum capacity of the facility which is 1280.

The Department of Corrections is proposing opening up space at OSP-M to women to address the overcrowding at CCCF. DOC is asking for an appropriation of \$10.5 million from the state’s General Fund to open 176 beds to house women. The money would be used to repair and equip the facility, provide staff, and accommodate women through the remainder of the biennium (through June 2017).

“Opening OSP Minimum is being presented as the only way of dealing with the growing number of women incarcerated in Oregon,” said Julia Yoshimoto, Director of the Women in Prison Project at the Oregon Justice Resource Center. “We think this is an expensive way of addressing the over-incarceration of women in our state.”

Oregon Justice Resource Center has identified six solutions that can be implemented in the short-term to reduce prison bed demand enough to avoid opening OSP-M at this time. These solutions are achievable and far more affordable than prison expansion. The solutions are:

- Expanding eligibility and use of the Family Sentencing Alternative Pilot Program that allows qualified offenders the chance to serve their sentence in the community and stay with their children
- Streamline the process of granting executive clemency and assist women who may be eligible in preparing and submitting their petitions
- Identify, review and (where appropriate) grant applications for early release as Oregon law allows to severely/terminally ill, permanently incapacitated, or elderly inmates
- Where appropriate, avoid sending women to prison for probation violations where those violations are technical rather than the commission of new crimes
- Increase the length of transitional leave and expand access to and capacity of alternative incarceration programs (drug treatment, cognitive behavioral therapy)
- Increase pro bono assistance to women who are or will be eligible for parole.

“The six solutions we’ve identified will require cooperation by different actors in the criminal justice system,” said Yoshimoto. “But they’re all fixes that can be put in place now and will – in combination – likely do enough to address the immediate issue of overcrowding. What needs to happen in the long-term is a shift in attitude and approach. We need to question why we are locking up so many women for offenses that would not have attracted such lengthy sentences a few years ago.”

Oregon Justice Resource Center has released full details of its proposed solutions as well as background information about Oregon’s women prisoner population. They are available at the organization’s website at <http://ojrc.info/women-in-prison-project/>

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Please contact Alice Lundell at the Oregon Justice Resource Center for interviews or further information.

Our reports, “An Alternative to Women’s Prison Expansion in Oregon” and “Women in Prison in Oregon” are available online at <http://ojrc.info/women-in-prison-project/>,

Oregon Justice Resource Center is a Portland, Oregon-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides direct legal services and works on criminal justice reform.