



STATEMENT FROM OREGON JUSTICE RESOURCE CENTER ON THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET PROPOSAL TO FUND WOMEN'S PRISON EXPANSION

December 2nd, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“Oregon has overlooked the needs of justice-involved women for too long and it’s clear we can no longer afford to continue doing that. The solution is not to open a second prison at huge cost for the sake of a comparatively small number of women. Crime rates in Oregon are near historic lows since the 1980s. Arrest rates for women are down significantly in the last 20 years for person and property crimes and yet the women’s incarceration rate has tripled in that time.

Opening OSP-Minimum will create a “new normal” of more prison beds for women that will inevitably be filled. Once again, Oregon will have missed an opportunity to focus on solutions that address over-incarceration. We recognize that Coffee Creek has been over the threshold of 1280 for some time and that the safety concerns this raises must be addressed, but a second prison is the wrong answer.

Better – and far cheaper – solutions that will address the urgent need for action:

- Legislators should look seriously at repealing Measure 57
- The State should look more closely at the women we currently incarcerate and release those who are low-risk and serving disproportionately long sentences using the mechanisms already in place such as clemency
- District attorneys should rein in any over-charging practices and should be focused on diverting defendants who would otherwise actually be serving prison time and are good candidates into alternative incarceration programs.

Oregon is at a historic moment. We can choose whether to meaningfully address the causes of over-incarceration or to pump millions more dollars into locking up an ever-growing number of women in a futile attempt to solve social problems such as addiction and poverty.”

Statement to be attributed to Julia Yoshimoto, Attorney and Project Director, Women in Prison Project, Oregon Justice Resource Center.

For more information or interviews, please contact Alice Lundell, Director of Communication for OJRC, at w. 503-563-3356, c. 503-781-1405 or alice@ojrc.org.