



Director's Message

February 15, 2011

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to be able to announce that Governor Kitzhaber has continued my appointment as Director of the Oregon Youth Authority. It is a privilege to work with each of you every day and to be able to talk about the good work performed throughout this agency. We face significant financial challenges ahead, and I am confident that this agency can meet those challenges and continue to achieve our mission.

As the revenue forecast released this morning by the state's Office of Economic Analysis shows, Oregon's unemployment rate remains high, but a slow recovery appears to be under way. General Fund revenues for the remainder of this biennium are expected to remain relatively flat. For 2011-2013, however, the General Fund revenues are forecast to be down an additional \$81 million from the December 2010 forecast. This continues to place Oregon's revenues next biennium at \$3.5 billion below the amount needed to continue operating at current service levels.

In the short-term, this appears to mean OYA will be able to avoid making additional budget cuts this biennium. This will provide our agency the stability needed to move forward with the efficiency measures under way and to continue preparations for implementing structural changes next biennium. Those changes are expected to include some level of close-custody capacity reduction and layoffs.

As you know, the Governor has left open the possibility of adding back some funding to his proposed budget to reduce the severity of cuts to OYA and the state's juvenile justice system. Since we don't know what the final budget number for the agency will be, we don't yet know which units, facilities and staff will be affected. As we learn more while working with the Governor and Legislature, I will continue to share those details with you.

What we do know is that it continues to be important to find ways to restructure and streamline how Oregon government provides services. And we are in the process of doing that right now. We are moving forward with initiatives to improve the timeliness of intake assessments, more quickly match and place youth offenders in the right treatment settings, optimize the amount of time youth offenders stay in close custody, and develop an assessment tool to assist with release decisions.

These and other planned initiatives will significantly improve our ability to provide core public safety and youth reformation services in a cost-effective and sustainable manner. During these difficult times we must continue to work together and focus on our mission, values and vision. Our goal must be to continue to serve Oregon's delinquent youth in a manner that preserves public safety and reduces future victimization. Your help in designing and implementing these improvements will in turn improve outcomes for the youth we serve and the communities to which they return.

Please know that I appreciate everything you do for the youth we serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colette S. Peters". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Colette S. Peters
Director

INTEGRITY * PROFESSIONALISM
*** ACCOUNTABILITY * RESPECT ***