



JOHN A. KITZHABER, MD  
GOVERNOR

May 11, 2012

Adam Gelb, Director  
Public Safety Performance Project  
Pew Center on the States  
901 E Street NW, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, DC 20004

cc: Denise O'Donnell  
Director, Bureau of Justice Assistance  
Office of Justice Programs  
U.S. Department of Justice

Dear Mr. Gelb:

Oregon has distinguished itself by prioritizing data driven policymaking focused on making smart investments in the long-term interests of our state. In the past two legislative sessions, our state leaders have shepherded through comprehensive, bipartisan legislation to reform our highest spending areas, education and healthcare, to ensure taxpayers are getting the best return on their investment in these core functions of state government. Now we are ready to turn our collective attention to another core function and the state's third highest area of spending: public safety.

Oregon's prison population has more than doubled over the past two decades and our biennial corrections budget now exceeds \$1.4 billion. If we fail to act, our prison population and budget will continue to grow at unsustainable rates, encroaching still further on our capacity to fund other essential components of our public safety system, including state courts, state police, community supervision, and re-entry programs.

In recent years, we have convened two working groups to analyze the sentencing and corrections policies that drive our rising correctional population. This work established the foundation for today's policy discourse, but did not culminate in decisive legislative action. This time must be different. Oregon cannot afford inaction. We know that we can develop and implement laws and policies that safely and effectively control the size and cost of our prison population, and we need to do it now.

We submit this plan to express our interest in partnering with the Public Safety Performance Project of the Pew Center on the States and participating in the Justice Reinvestment Initiative of the Bureau of Justice Assistance (United States Department of Justice). We request technical assistance from Pew to develop and implement fiscally sound, data driven sentencing and corrections policies that protect public safety, hold offenders accountable, and control corrections spending.

As state leaders, we commit ourselves to:

- Designating a bipartisan, inter-branch task force (the Commission on Public Safety) to analyze the drivers of Oregon's prison population and to develop recommendations that will protect public safety, hold offenders accountable, and control corrections costs;
- Providing Pew and its partners with full and timely access to the data required for the analysis of our sentencing and corrections systems and the generation of policy options that are tailored to the unique features of Oregon's criminal justice system;
- Using the recommendations of the Commission on Public Safety as the basis of legislative and administrative action in 2013;
- Strongly considering the reinvestment of a portion of the savings generated by the policies and practices adopted through this process into other areas of the criminal justice system, like crime victims services, and programs proven by research to reduce recidivism; and
- Advancing this effort along the following timeline:
  - Spring/summer 2012: Analyze data and current Oregon policies and practices, and review best practices from Oregon and other states
  - Late summer/early fall 2012: Develop policy options based on the analysis
  - Late fall/early winter 2012: Issue consensus findings and recommendations
  - Winter/spring 2013: Draft and advance omnibus legislation and other measures as needed

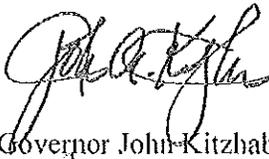
We also understand that in requesting technical assistance, we are asking Pew and its partners to:

- Support the chairperson of the Commission on Public Safety with facilitation and administration needs, including assisting with providing regular updates to the legislature on the progress of the Commission;
- Conduct research and analysis of Oregon's sentencing and corrections system, including:
  - analyzing the sources of prison population and cost growth;
  - auditing sentencing and corrections laws and policies;
  - assessing barriers to the successful completion of probation, post-prison supervision and parole.
- Help develop policy options that will protect public safety, hold offenders accountable, and control corrections costs, including:
  - educating members of the Commission about evidence-based practices in sentencing and corrections, including providing case studies from other states;
  - facilitating the development of recommendations based on data and research;

- projecting the impact of policy options and consensus recommendations on correctional populations and costs;
- assisting in drafting consensus findings and recommendations to be issued by the Commission in its required 2012 report;
- Work with the legislature and the Office of the Governor, and the Commission on Public Safety as needed, in drafting and/or commenting on legislation to be introduced in the 2013 Legislative Assembly;
- Assist the legislature, the Office of the Governor, and the Commission in educating the public and policymakers about the Commission's goals, findings, recommendations, and legislation and other measures, including:
  - continuing to comment and provide feedback, as requested, on draft omnibus legislation and other measures;
  - engaging and consulting with justice system stakeholders;
  - organizing and coordinating public, legislative, or stakeholder forums or other events;
  - organizing and coordinating the efforts of key justice system and public policy stakeholders and opinion leaders;

Oregon has made significant strides over the years toward making our state one of the safest and healthiest in the nation. Yet we can do much better. Together, we and other leaders of our state must develop and implement the changes necessary to optimize the use of Oregon's most expensive public safety resource—state prison beds—and make strategic investments across our public safety system. Holding public safety paramount, we are dedicated to making a comprehensive set of reforms that yield a more effective criminal justice system. We look forward to the possibility of working with Pew to reach this goal.

Sincerely,

Governor John Kitzhaber, M.D.

Chief Justice Thomas A. Balmer



Senate President Peter Courtney



Co-Speaker of the House Bruce Hanna



Co-Speaker of the House Arnie Roblan