

Julie Vaughn: We are now recording. This hearing for OAR 291-131, Mail rules, is now in session, and we are recording to maintain a permanent record. My name is Julie Vaughn, and I am the presiding officer today. Today is August 26th, 2025, and the time is 1:07 p.m. The purpose of this hearing is to take public comment on proposed changes to the rules governing the sending, receipt and processing of adult in custody mail in Department of Corrections facilities.

The Administrative Rule Division (OAR 291-131) establishes the department's policy and procedures governing the rules on mail with inherent limitations of resources and the need for facility security, safety, health, order, discipline, and adult in custody rehabilitation, it is the policy of the Department of Corrections to permit adults in custody to send and receive mail in the manner and under the circumstances set forth in OAR 291-131.

For a little bit of background, in July of 2025, the department adopted temporary amendments to its administrative rules on mail, and these are effective through December 29th, 2025.

These proposed rule changes are needed to remove unnecessary restrictions and clarify for the public and AICs what is and is not permitted in incoming mail. Now, (02:12) I'm going to summarize the changes.

These proposed amendments are needed to:

- 1) Remove the 20-pound weight restriction on envelopes and move to a standard weight restriction because many of the public have been confused about the 20-pound weight restriction, and white envelopes that met that criteria are not widely available;
- 2) Clarify the definitions and dispositions of mail that is refused, which means returned unopened, uh, for noncompliance with these rules, um, and mail that is rejected, and that means returned upon opening and inspection for not following these rules.
- 3) Clarify that business cards are unauthorized enclosures and certain kinds of writing materials are not allowed because they can be used to smuggle controlled substances into DOC facilities.
- 4) Clarify that legal mail and official mail may include a single postage paid return envelope that meets the division rules criteria the mail rule criteria to facilitate the return of mail in legal matters and official matters, and to bring the department's rules in line with its practices; and
- (5) Clarify rules relating to legal mail and official mail.

So, (04:05) we will be taking comments about these changes. The agency invites comments about whether other options should be considered for achieving the rules, goals, while reducing the negative economic impact on businesses or the public, in addition to presenting oral comments at this hearing, anyone may submit written comments until 12:00 noon on September 19th, 2025, which is the close of the public comment period. Details for submitting written comments by mail, email or online to the Rule Coordinator is on your screen. You could see it here. I'm also going to copy and paste this information into the chat for you, in case that's easier. Okay, that information that's on your screen, is also now in the chat. And just FYI, the mailing address to submit written comments can also be found on the notice of proposed rulemaking filing through the Secretary of State, and that can also be found on the department's website. Lots of different avenues to get the information you need. And one more reminder, any comments received after the close of the public comment period will not be reviewed or considered by the agency. I'm going to do one last check (06:01) to see if there's any last-minute folks interested in providing testimony today, and I see nothing, so we are going to begin the presentations. When I call your name, please state your name and if you represent an organization, state the name of the organization. You have three minutes to present and I'm going to call first on our list today. We're starting with Aurora Morely Shewell. I'm going to

stop sharing. All right, All right, Aurora, are you off mute? Can't hear you. I see that you've turned off your mute. Maybe check and see if you need to select a different audio input. Sorry for the technical issues. We'll get it figured out.

Aurora Shewell: Okay, can you hear me?

Julie Vaughn: Yes.

Aurora Shewell: Okay –

Julie Vaughn: ****.

Aurora Shewell: – wonderful. Let me turn my volume up so I can hear you.

Julie Vaughn: All right –

Aurora Shewell: Okay.

Julie Vaughn: – Aurora, the floor is yours. Please state your name and any affiliation and I will start the clock on your 3-minute timer and give you a little bit of a, a warning at 30 seconds.

Aurora Shewell: Okay, thank you Julie.

Julie Vaughn: Thank you.

Aurora Shewell: All right, um, so my name is Aurora Shewell, and it's (08:00) an honor to be speaking to you today on behalf of all AICs and their family members. Um, I just have a few brief points I wanted to mention, and Julie actually helped clarify some, um, questions I had, so thank you very much, Julie. Um, so my husband is currently and AIC as of August of last year, and um, since then, I've seen the mail rules become more and more, um, kind of excessively, uh, restrictive. Um, and I totally understand that there are people that are trying to send in, uh, prohibited materials, um, but oh, and sorry, just to introduce ourselves, so that is me and my husband, just a couple more. Okay, so that's us. Um, so one thing that when he first went in was allowed was cards. Um, this was the Valentine's Day card that I had purchased for him that was not allowed. Um, and one other family member had mentioned to me that she would send cards and photos with, um, an app called Pelapost, so instead of, you know, since this was removed, I sent him a card that way, and it was pretty expensive, and you know, I'm just kinda speaking for the whole of all, um, all family members that every time the rules change and removes more like affordable options to, um, communicate with their loved ones, it's, it's very expensive. Um, so like, this box of the 24-pound, yeah, 24-pound, um, envelopes I can no longer use. It sounds like it's gonna change in December, but and, and then this wrapping things up **** oh yeah, and then I heard a rumor, I'm not sure where (10:00) I heard this, but that the DOC is considering removing, um, um, home printed photos all together, and um, here is some of my rejected mail. So, I will print, you know, every day I'll print, um, like a photo and then write my letter on there for my husband, and if you guys do away with that, it's gonna be more expensive, you know, I

have to print things then at Walgreens, so it just kinda ***** use, you know, the more expensive, um, apps. So, and then, ***** oh, yeah –

Julie Vaughn: ***** –

Aurora Shewell: – so it's family or friends are –

Julie Vaughn: – 30 seconds.

Aurora Shewell: – okay, thank you, Julie.

Julie Vaughn: ***** mm hmm.

Aurora Shewell: So, last point, um, if family or friends are breaking rules, they need to be prosecuted individually, um, you know, it would be great if the DOC would not punish all of us for one person's breaking of the rule. Um, they need to be, you know, dealt with individually. Um, and then lastly, um, Amazon returns, I had called the facility and spoke with someone about, um, some books that I had purchased for my husband, and they said oh, yeah, we have a big pile here of returns, so I think maybe having the DOC work with Amazon to facilitate a return system so that the, uh, AIC family members can have their books returned to them, I think would be beneficial and help us save some money on that, so, that is all. Thank you for allowing me to speak.

Julie Vaughn: ***** thank you so much, and just a, a little reminder, if you don't mind, if you can summarize your comments –

Aurora Shewell: Yeah.

Julie Vaughn: – and send that to me by email, that'd be great. We have, we could put that in with our, um, summary of comments as like a written version of your comments. Thank you so much.

Aurora Shewell: Sure. Thank you, Julie.

Julie Vaughn: And next to present, let me get my list, is Lakyn, Lakyn Lonewalker.

Lakyn Lonewalker: Hi, thank you. Um –

Julie Vaughn: *****.

Lakyn Lonewalker: – and I supposed to have my camera on?

Julie Vaughn: Oh, you don't have (12:13) to have your camera on. We can just listen to you. I'm gonna go ahead and turn my camera off and mute myself, and the floor is yours, Lakyn, remember to start with your affiliation, um, name and affiliation to get your started. Thank you so much.

Lakyn Lonewalker: **** thank you. Um, so my name is Lakyn Lonewalker, and I am simply just a citizen. Not affiliated with anyone. Um, so I am here because the communication with loved ones on the inside was already incredibly strained. Um, with the ODOC deciding to **** to restrict to extremes, denying anything that wasn't on copy paper, no more highly anticipated birthday cards, holiday greetings, nothing on colored paper. No printed photos on paper. Nothing that wasn't within a very **** guideline to begin with, um, and this also **** and a dramatic increase in violated mail, um, leading to the mail rooms being incredibly overwhelmed, um, which makes it hard for them to keep up with required notifications to AICs. Um, the individual I person, personally sent mail to, um, was never given a violation notice telling him that I eh, ever sent anything, even though the rules said notice was to be given. The individual **** I communicate with, um, happens to be a president of a club at the Oregon State Penitentiary, allowing him to work with administration to fix these things. Um, the superintendent made an order to correct this issue, but in response within 2 weeks that ODOC decided to put forth an emergency temporary rule. Uh, (14:00) this very rule is based on this, um, to remove the language that requires notices to be given, um, to the intended AIC, there, uh, when there is a mail violation. Um, so I object to the adoption of these new rules. Uh, will unnecessarily guarantee future communication problems, um, just one example of a real life, um, person that is incarcerated, um, that went all the way through the grievance process at ODOC or in ODOC, um, so a grandmother sent a birthday card to her grandson at Oregon State Penitentiary. The mail room rejected it without even opening it because they could tell it was a greeting card and already violated the new mail rule. The mail **** was simply marked return to sender. Uh, she got it back assuming the grandson rejected it, um, in the meantime, her grandson was so worried, um, that his grandma didn't send a birthday card, because this was very unlike her, um, that led him to begin to frantically call everyone he knew, um, to ensure that his grandmother –

Julie Vaughn: You have 30 seconds.

Lakyn Lonewalker: – **** –

Julie Vaughn: Thank you.

Lakyn Lonewalker: – thank you, thank you. Um, to ensure that his grandmother was still alive. Um, I would just like to really stress that, um, things are already so complicated, the **** really hard to keep up with, um, everything that's kind of changing, um, and I just would really like to thank you for this time and also please, um, allow this rule to be, do not allow this rule to be adopted, thank you.

Julie Vaughn: Thank you both so much for sharing your comments today. Everyone who has registered to testify has been given the opportunity to present. So, we are going to close out this hearing, and adjourn the meeting today, and thank you all for your attendance and your testimony. We are closing this meeting at 1:23 p.m. Thank you so much.

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