



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

April 14th, 2023

Timothy G. Sekerak
Chief Clerk of the House
State Capitol Building
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Vote Explanation on HB 2178

Dear Chief Clerk Sekerak,

Yesterday, I voted “no” on House Bill 2178, a bill that would require state agencies to analyze and report on how many of the goods and services they utilize that could be provided by work programs operated by the Department of Corrections. This note is to explain my vote.

I believe strongly that our correctional facilities should be providing work training and opportunities for meaningful work as a way of promoting successful reintegration and a reduction in recidivism rates. Oregon Corrections Enterprises (OCE) provides these opportunities—and, in turn, provides state agencies with furniture and other items that are truly beautiful.

However, I voted against this bill because I have deep concerns about the approach taken in HB 2178. First, it’s an added layer of unnecessary bureaucracy on state agencies; they’re already working closely with OCE. Adults in custody are getting meaningful opportunities, and agencies are getting quality products. More bureaucratic processes aren’t needed.

Second, I worry that this bill could cause OCE to significantly expand in order to meet increased demand, turning it into a high-volume manufacturing operation rather than the thoughtful, successful training and rehabilitation program it is today. There’s an important line we must maintain between work training opportunities and exploitative, forced prison labor. I worry that HB 2178 crosses that line.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Courtney Neron".

State Representative Courtney Neron

