



**Testimony of Kimberly McCullough, Policy Director
In Support of HB 3289 with the -1 Amendments
House Judiciary Committee
April 5, 2019**

Chair Williamson and Members of the Committee:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon¹ supports HB 3289 with the -1 amendments, which directs the Criminal Justice Commission to conduct a study on local and regional correctional facilities across the state. Such a study is crucial for the advancement of jail reform policy and the improvement of conditions in our state's jails—both for the people who are incarcerated and those who work at our state's jails.

At the ACLU, we frequently receive complaints from incarcerated persons and their loved ones about jail conditions. Across the country, and here in Oregon, we continuously hear about conditions that threaten their health, safety, and human dignity. The devastating effects of such treatment, particularly on people with mental illness, are well known.

Incarcerated people are a population with significant medical and mental health needs, but prisoner health care services are often abysmal, in many cases leading to needless suffering, disability, and death, as well as a serious threat to public health when contagious disease goes undiagnosed or untreated.

Prisoners' rights to read, write, speak, practice their religion, and communicate with the outside world are often curtailed far beyond what is necessary for institutional security. Not only are these activities central to the ability of prisoners to retain their humanity, but they also contribute to the flow of information between correctional facilities and the outside world and thus provide a vital form of oversight of these closed institutions.

¹ The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to preservation and enhancement of civil liberties and civil rights, with more than 45,000 members and supporters statewide.

This study will help policymakers better understand what is happening in Oregon jails. Better understanding will inform better policy and improved conditions. This will, in turn, make a positive impact on recidivism rates and the health and well-being of our entire community.

This study will include the collect of data that is not currently being tracked, including demographic information, death rates, and data about the medical mental and behavioral health conditions of incarcerated persons. **This study will also focus on the availability and cost of health care,** along with barriers to obtaining health care.

The study will also shed light on jail standards, policies and procedures, much of which are currently unavailable to the public; with a focus on the constitutional rights of incarcerated persons and an evaluation of how Oregon's jail administration compare to national best practices.

We are extremely pleased to see that this study will be informed by an advisory council, which will include organizations that advocate for civil rights, civil liberties and disability rights, along with other justice system actors. This collaboration will help ensure that the process for developing the study and analysis of its outcomes will be the best possible product to help this legislature shape future policy.

For these reasons, the ACLU of Oregon urges you to support HB 3289 with the -1 amendments. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.