

Measure 11 Impacts on Youth Severe

Civil rights panel calls for changes

Oregon incarcerates young people and transfers them to adult court at a higher rate than almost any other state, according to a report released Tuesday by the Oregon Council on Civil Rights. In fact, Oregon youth face incarceration rates significantly higher than in Texas and Louisiana.

The report "Youth and Measure 11: Impacts of Mandatory Minimums," includes specific reform recommendations for a more effective, fair and science-informed approach to youth involvement in the justice system.

A key finding from the study shows that Oregon's harsh sentences haven't kept pace with modern brain science. Although research suggests that the brain

doesn't fully develop until a person's 20's, Oregon's rigid mandatory minimum sentences leave little room for a young person's capacity to change.

Young people of color are disproportionately harmed by Oregon's criminal justice system: In 2012, black youth were 26 times more likely to be indicted of a Measure 11 crime than their white counterparts.

In addition, the costs of Oregon's system are high. The state can spend as much as nearly \$100,000 a year per child to incarcerate Measure 11 offenders. The impact on young people can sometimes feel like a de facto life sentence, with lack of access to stable housing, higher education and employment due to barriers that impact their lives long after they have served their term.

"Youth charged under Measure 11 — even those who do not receive an adult sentence — face lifetime



Dr. Alisha Moreland-Capua

barriers to education and employment," said Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian. "Oregon's juvenile justice system brings high costs and poor outcomes. We should modernize our approach to better prepare young people to have a meaningful life after release."

Dr. Alisha Moreland-Capua, a

physician, scholar and executive director of the OHSU Avel Gordly Center for Healing, stressed that while our understanding of brain science has changed, Oregon policies have not.

"Brain science tells us that for youth, the brain is still 'under construction,'" said Dr. Alisha Moreland-Capua. "Young people lack the skills to effectively navigate an adult criminal justice system that disrupts the development process at a critical stage. Oregon should join the many other states in recognizing the role of brain development in criminal justice reform."

The Oregon Council on Civil Rights' policy recommendations include making prosecution data, such as demographic data of youth referred to prosecutors' offices, publicly available to support evidence-based policymaking.

Youth charged under Measure 11 should not be automatically

moved to adult court, but instead a judge should weigh the unique facts of the case before removing a young person from the juvenile system, the panel concluded.

Other suggestions include granting youth a chance for a second-look hearing after serving 50 percent of a sentence and boosting investment in anti-poverty safety net programs that promote family stability and decrease future involvement with the criminal justice system.

"Oregon can do more to improve public safety outcomes while giving young people a chance to thrive," said Roberta Phillip-Robbins, chair of the Oregon Council on Civil Rights. "We hope to be a force to adjust our misguided approach to youth and Measure 11. It's clear that we can make better use of taxpayer resources while improving public safety and reducing recidivism in communities around the state."

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The Week in Review



Jeff Name Change Debate

A neighborhood generated discussion on changing the name of Jefferson High School drew some passionate arguments during a meeting Monday night at the North Portland Library. Jefferson graduate Clifford Walker, a local black historian and activist, objected to a public high named after a former slave owner. Others warned about a gentrified community erasing Jefferson's current history and said they would prefer if neighbors would focus on supporting and improving the school.

Oil Terminal Permit Rejected

Amid the concerns of more oil trains and the potential for spills, Washington Gov. Jay Inslee rejected a permit for a massive oil-by-rail terminal proposed at the port of Vancouver Monday. Inslee said he agreed with the recommendation of a state energy panel, which voted in November to deny the application.

Business Center Up in Flames

A fire destroyed several business housed inside the Macadam Center in southwest Portland Sunday night. People working in a call center noticed smoke coming from an elevator shaft and called 9-1-1. By the time fire fighters got there, the fire had already weakened the building so much that fire fighters had

to get out and fight the flames from the outside.

Amtrak Engineer Missed Post

Federal investigators say the engineer at the controls of the Amtrak passenger train that derailed south of Seattle needed to slow down before taking a curve over I-5, but missed posted warning signs. The National Transportation Safety Board released the investigation update Thursday, more than a month after the Dec. 18 derailment that left three people dead and dozens injured.

Skipping State of the Union

Earl Blumenauer opted to skip President Trump's first State of the Union address Tuesday night, but sent Portland "Dreamer" Aldo Solano instead, a local resident who stands to lose his legal status if Congress doesn't negotiate an extension or permanent fix to the Obama administration's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which expires March 8.

Apology to Black Journalist

Housing and Urban Development official with strong ties to the President has apologized for calling a member of the press "Miss Piggy" on Twitter last week. The now-deleted tweet from Lynne Patton, a HUD administrator, was aimed at April Ryan, the black Washington bureau chief of American Urban Radio Networks who also is a CNN political analyst.



Cleveland Drops Logo

The Cleveland Indians are finally parting ways with their Chief Wahoo logo. In an announcement from the league office on Monday, beginning in 2019, the team's jerseys will no longer feature the Native American caricature, which has been widely characterized as offensive and racist.

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