



March 1, 2018

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Dear Advocates:

Thank you for your letter dated February 27, 2018, regarding juvenile justice in Oregon.

As someone who was once a practitioner in juvenile court, I care very deeply about the issues you raise in your letter. It is my expectation that all youth in Oregon custody be treated fairly and with dignity. Prior to the release of Disability Rights Oregon's (DRO) report regarding NORCOR, I requested a holistic assessment of Oregon's juvenile justice system by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention via the Center for Coordinated Assistance to States. Ultimately, the American Institutes for Research were tasked with this comprehensive assessment, and the interviews are ongoing and include several members of the groups in your coalition.

The assessment itself is being guided using the National Research Council's *Reforming Juvenile Justice* as a guide. The evaluation will include a review of the conditions, protocols, and practices at NORCOR, along with county juvenile detention facilities throughout the state. The findings and recommendations from this statewide review will help inform ways Oregon can reduce the number of youth in detention and lower juvenile recidivism rates, while keeping our communities safer and setting youth on a path for success.



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Your letter specifically raises the issue of DRO's report regarding the NORCOR facility. Since I became aware of the report, I ordered the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) not to place any youth under their supervision at NORCOR. I am aware that since the report, NORCOR has taken steps to update their policies and improve. But, I will not rescind my order until I am assured the facility is safe and appropriate. Furthermore, NORCOR Juvenile Directors Oversight Committee agrees that more must be done to ensure the healthy development of youth, and has already started exploring consulting firms that will perform an independent review of NORCOR. My office, along with OYA and the Youth Development Council (YDC) are fully committed to improving conditions for youth in custody throughout Oregon, and both agencies have agreed to assist with funding that consultation.

Finally, and more broadly to the topic of county juvenile detention facilities, the YDC, in partnership with the Oregon Juvenile Department Directors Association, has initiated a process to review the existing detention guidelines. A goal of this review is to enhance and improve the guidelines by including current best practices some of which are outlined in your letter. The groups have met once already, and I am assured that stakeholders from the advocacy community will be included in this process.

Oregon is a state that is at its best when all stakeholders are at the table, working together toward change, and I know that we can look forward to that collaboration when it comes to improving the juvenile justice system.

Sincerely,

  
Governor Kate Brown