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### **EMO commends Oregon Department of Corrections for new program to find innovative alternatives to solitary confinement**

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) commends the Oregon Department of Corrections for being chosen, along with four other states, for a two-year program with the Vera Institute to find innovative alternatives to using solitary confinement in prisons and jails.

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's work in criminal justice reform is based on a restorative justice model that emphasizes accountability, recognition of the suffering caused by the wrong done, and taking concrete actions to make amends and move towards healing all involved—the victim, perpetrator and community including family, friends and neighbors. Our efforts to reduce the use of solitary confinement are consistent with these principles. The United States accounts for 5 percent of the world's population and 25 percent of the world's incarcerated, and it holds more prisoners in solitary confinement than any other democratic nation.

Evidence-based research shows that long-term solitary confinement is ineffective and counterproductive and is a form of torture. The National Religious Campaign Against Torture states, "Half of all prison suicides occur in conditions of solitary confinement. Isolation fundamentally alters the brain, creates and exacerbates mental illness, denies opportunity for community, and violates inherent human dignity. It creates toxic environments for incarcerated people, correctional staff and administrators."

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon will continue to advocate for criminal justice reform.

*Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon is a statewide association of Christian denominations, congregations, ecumenical organizations and interfaith partners working together to improve the lives of Oregonians through community ministry programs, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, environmental ministry and public policy advocacy.*

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