



Chair Tomei and Members of the Committee,

My name is Judy Harris and I am the Executive Director of Youth Contact, Inc. Youth Contact is a private nonprofit agency, providing services to reduce risk factors and to support protective factors for middle school age youth using JCP funds and youth investment funds for student retention. Youth Contact also provides services to high risk school age youth with significant risk via Youth Investment and Alcohol & Drug 70 funds.

JCP/middle school based services and our high school Youth Investment and Alcohol & Drug 70 funded services provide placement of masters' level prevention/intervention trained staff in 23 public schools on a daily basis. This JCP program on average has served our 400 high-risk youth and their families each year. These youth are considered likely to enter the juvenile justice system according to a research based JCP assessment screen. Since the program's inception in 2000, outcomes have shown that approximately 91% of youth have been prevented from delinquency and juvenile justice involvement.

School Retention services, since 1986 and Substance Abuse Prevention services, since 1984 have also provided assistance to over 6,000 youth and their families annually, with equally positive outcomes. For example, in Student Retention services participants show an increase in school attendance to a minimum of an 88 % attendance rate and a decrease in disciplinary referrals of over 71% from the start of service .

These programs are all responding to a similar and consistent group of risk factors including family conflict, substance use/abuse by either the youth or the parent or both, significant trauma history and substantial lack of resources impacting family stability. These risk factors can increase the likelihood for various problems such as delinquency, chronic abuse/dependency of alcohol and/or drugs, gang involvement , mental health concerns to name a few.

Washington County has effectively developed a unified system that provides services to school-age children through youth 20 years of age in a manner that supports academic success, reduces criminal involvement and is integrated, measurable and accountable. This system may be underfunded but is clearly not broken in Washington County.

This is the precise reason why a statewide distribution of both JCP and Youth Investment funds needs to be continued to counties and tribes, so that cost-efficient and effective community-based systems of services and supports for children, youth and families will be continued and not be dismantled.

Please consider the need to place emphasis on family stability and empowerment in order to most efficiently and effectively reduce risk for children and youth. Parents who may currently be struggling need strong engagement to achieve success in their families and with their at-risk children. Parents must be helped to both appropriately provide nurturing and structure with their children. If we can continue in this direction we can dramatically benefit all children in Oregon.