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To: Chair Representative Lively and, Co-Chairs Representatives Hack and Piluso, and members of the Committee

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Things are done a little differently in the Columbia River Gorge. Whether we're strapping ourselves to kites to harness wind, raising the sails for a Wednesday evening race, treading down a trail in our faithful hikers, or strapping boards to our feet to fly through powder down a mountain, we're always looking for the right tools and good conditions to reach our goals.

In 2011, a small group of Columbia River Gorge leaders gathered for an event, as they had many times before, and realized they were running around the same old hamster wheel. They could rally around the shared goal of better outcomes for struggling kids and families; but that's usually where the collaboration stopped and the finger pointing started. If only the school district could create smaller classrooms kids wouldn't act out as much, if only DHS could send the community mental health provider the correct referral, if only the community mental health provider could shorten wait times for child psychiatrists, if only, if only and on and on.

Each of the organizations was trying to reach the shared goal, but were they given the right tools and good conditions?

One of the leaders spoke out and shared an observation, one that would be the spark to start a culture shift in the Columbia River Gorge community, and the observation was this; many of the characteristics expressed by community organizations were the same symptoms expressed by people that have experienced trauma. Symptoms of organizations that have experienced trauma include things like communication breakdown, repetitive failures, powerless staff and clients, lack of conflict resolution, increased aggression, and poor emotional management.

Just as individual people experience trauma so do organizations, systems, made up of people. Just as stressors can exceed an individual's ability to cope, so too can stressors exceed an organization's ability to cope. This process leads to symptoms in the organization and the people that make up the organization. And the people that make up an organization are not only staff but also those clients who seek services. And the people that make up organizations also make up the community.

So where does that leave us?



The school district might not have the budget to create smaller classrooms but they might be able to adjust environments so all kids feel safer physically, emotionally, and psychologically. DHS could sit down with the community mental health provider and learn more about the referrals process. The community mental health provider could communicate about the resource strain in psychiatry and ways to access supplemental services as a bridge during wait periods. Solutions such as these are all examples of trauma informed care practices in action. Trauma informed care practices help to build organizations that are better prepared to handle stressors because stressors will always exist.

There is still cross organizational conflict between organizations in the Columbia River Gorge but you won't find much finger pointing anymore. They have hopped off the old hamster wheel. Through trauma informed care practices, a framework of shared language and shared understanding has been built. When conflict arises now, the first thought is not, "what's wrong," it's "what's happened?" Organizations look to see how they can step in to provide support and collaborative problem solving.

So, again, where does that leave us?

In October 2015, the Columbia River Gorge community was awarded the Mobilizing Action for Resilient Communities (MARC) grant by the Health Federation of Philadelphia with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and California Endowment. This cross-county collaboration is possible due the existence of the Columbia Gorge Health Council created as a result of Coordinated Care Organization legislation and the community drive to do things a little differently. The Columbia Gorge Health Council serves a multi-county sector in the Columbia River Gorge area focusing on both individual and social determinants of health, on organizations and community.

The MARC grant funds community trauma informed care practices work through October 2017 in Oregon counties Hood River, Sherman, and Wasco. Through the grant, free community trainings and learnings collaboratives are offered, organizations supported and coached towards trauma informed care practices implementation, new organizations and workforce sectors engaged in what it means to be trauma informed, and knowledge more widely spread throughout the community. MARC grant staff also supported the training of over 100 staff members at Mid-Columbia Children's Council, the Head Start and Early Head Start providers in the Columbia River Gorge. Providing staff at all levels, administrative, maintenance, and teaching with shared knowledge and tools to create a healthier culture in which staff work and children and families receive services.

The MARC grant is the third iteration of funding in the area focused on creating a more trauma informed community. This time around, special focus has been given to the physical medical and justice sectors with the goal of increased knowledge and engagement. In October 2016, the grant funded a trauma and resiliency summit made free to the community and saw 214 people attend. Out of those two days there are many stories to be shared of paths changed. In May 2017, we will be hosting a trauma informed care practices event focused on those individuals working in the justice system. How many stories of changed paths will come out of this event simply by spreading

knowledge and providing tools? The justice system fills a needed and noble role just as many of the other social services offered in different communities.



We have created these systems and organizations for people to do good and needed work, to support communities to be healthy and whole. So, I leave you with this thought; are we allowing those organizations the freedom to use the right tools and to create good conditions?