



March 26, 2019

TO: Senator Floyd Prozanski, Chair  
Senate Committee on Judiciary  
FR: Bob Joondeph, Disability Rights Oregon  
RE: Supporting SB 973 and the -1 amendments

Disability Rights Oregon (DRO) is the designated Protection and Advocacy program for Oregon. DRO is mandated by federal and state law to advocate for the rights of individuals with disabilities.

For many years, Oregon has sought to find the right balance of community-based and institutional-based behavioral health services for Oregonians in crisis. While the creation and growth of the Oregon Health Plan has increased the number of people with access to community-based treatment services, a small group of individuals have experienced a cycle of critical events resulting in repeated encounters with law enforcement and emergency hospital services. Local communities have not, in large part, developed services that are best equipped to help those who are directly affected to emerge from this cycle of crisis and low-level criminality. Those localities that have attracted or shifted resources to institute new models of response have not only decreased individual distress but also improved public safety and saved money.

SB 973 with the -1 amendments builds upon the demonstrated successes of some of our communities by providing resources for local and tribal communities to do the planning and create the structure to address the needs of individuals with complex behavioral health needs.

The CSG Justice Center has worked with criminal justice and behavioral health stakeholders to demonstrate the array of services and financing models that have been proven successful in lessening the cycle of crisis. These approaches are entirely consistent with the Oregon Performance Plan, an agreement between the Oregon Health Authority and the U.S. Department of Justice to decrease the use of our centralized, and expensive, state hospital through the growth of community supports and services.

The CSG Justice Center estimates that the new array of supports and services will result in, at least, a 20-percent reduction in the number of jail bookings and emergency department visits from this population, as well as a similar reduction in the number of aid and assist referrals to the Oregon State Hospital. This represents an estimated \$6 million savings for taxpayers and a huge reduction in human suffering for Oregonians complex behavioral health needs, their families and their communities.

DRO urges your support of SB 973. Thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony.