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Testimony in support of SB 5504
Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety
Submitted by Paul Solomon, Executive Director
March 28, 2019

Co-chairs Winters and Piluso, members of the Committee:

I am here today to express support for SB 5504, the Department of Corrections budget. My name is Paul Solomon and I am the Executive Director at Sponsors, Inc, based in Eugene. I am also the Chair of Lane County's Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC) and serve on the Governor's Reentry Council in addition to many other boards related to public safety.

I want to begin my testimony by stating that Sponsors supports the overall direction of Oregon's Department of Corrections and specifically the leadership of Director Peters. In particular, we have been impressed with Director Peters and her team's ongoing commitment to identifying solutions to our state's public safety challenges. In recent years the Department has been a productive partner in moving reforms and we appreciate their thoughtful work.

Sponsors, Inc., is a national leader in the delivery of Reentry services. We operate 20 buildings on seven sites in Lane County with over 200 units of housing for men and women with criminal histories and ancillary programs. Over the years, we developed strong working relationships with our county public safety partners, none more so than Lane County Parole and Probation. We attend trainings together, share office space, and work in concert to assess and address the criminogenic needs of the populations we serve. As a system, Lane County has invested significant Grant in Aid dollars in services provided by Sponsors, including, Transitional Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing (for both men and women), Cognitive Behavioral Therapies, Mental Health Services, Mentoring, and more.

We recently launched a new collaborative, The Way Home, with Lane County Parole & Probation and Homes for Good, the county's housing agency. This project provides homeless individuals returning to the county from prison with intensive services and permanent supportive housing. This project will build on years of similar successful work, which has allowed us to serve thousands of men and women on active supervision. In the last year alone, we have provided housing services to 590 people; CBT to 1,415 individuals; Mentoring (pre and post-release) to 248 people and a whopping 1,226 people received services through our Employment Program and Legal Clinics. None of which could be done without the support and collaboration of our friends at Lane County Parole and Probation. Additionally, we know these interventions are making a real difference. A recent analysis of Sponsors long-term housing program by the CJC showed a 60% reduction in recidivism from the County's baseline.

Services for People with Criminal Histories Since 1973

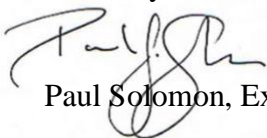
Phone: (541) 485-8341 Address: 338 Highway 99 North, Eugene, OR 97402 Fax: (541) 683-6196

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Several years ago Oregon set out on a path to significantly reduce our use of prison, namely through the Justice Reinvestment Program, and we have seen much success both in cost savings and use of prison beds. We acknowledge we still have much work to do to further decrease our reliance on prison while continuing our efforts to reduce recidivism.. However, the Governor's 2019-2021 budget recommends a current service level inflationary only increase in the community corrections budget of \$259 million, significantly less than the current biennium's \$273 million. While we'd agree that the state and counties should be considering ways to further decrease our use of prison and post-prison supervision, to do so through budget cuts and not associated, thoughtful policy, will do more harm than good. Counties across the state continue to experience significant budgetary challenges, and despite that are trying diligently to implement smart, cost saving programs, like The Way Home project. The current proposed budget would significantly impact the ability of counties to continue to implement existing programs let alone develop new programs. The TIME Study number is a real and accurate accounting of the time spent supervising men and women in Oregon. I'd urge you to support the Department of Corrections budget, with full funding of community corrections at the TIME study recommended level of \$319 million. Doing so will allow community correction to continue their good work in our counties and with our partners organizations.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Solomon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Paul" and last name "Solomon" clearly distinguishable.

Paul Solomon, Executive Director