

TO: Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

DATE: March 28, 2018

RE: Testimony on Senate Bills 969, 966, 1008 and 968

Good morning Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the Committee. My name is Deena Corso, and I am the Director of Multnomah County's Juvenile Services Division. Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you today.

At Multnomah County, we pride ourselves on providing a safety net to our community's most vulnerable citizens, and especially our at-risk youth. That is why we support the bills before you today.

Under current laws enacted more than two decades ago through the passage of Measure 11, an alarming number of young people in our community are being charged, prosecuted and sentenced as adults, a practice that you have heard through the testimony of others this morning is ineffective at improving public safety and also in conflict with the research and science regarding youth development.

I would like to focus my limited time today to speak very specifically to the significant racial and ethnic disparities that exist related to Measure 11 generally, and specifically in Multnomah County. Locally and nationally, Youth of Color are far more likely than White youth to be charged, prosecuted and sentenced in adult court.

From a statewide perspective, Oregon has a national reputation for its long, tenuous and brutal history of racial injustice. A recent study by the Campaign for Youth Justice and the National Association of Social Workers found that Hispanic, Black and Native American youth are all overrepresented in the adult system in Oregon, and have been for over a decade. Furthermore, Black youth in Oregon are overrepresented significantly with percentages as high as 22.7% of the youth in adult court compared to being only 2.3% of the population. Stated another way, Black teenagers in our state are 13.7 times more likely than their white counterparts to face a Measure 11 indictment. Oregon CAN and MUST do better for our youth of color.

Specific to my own jurisdiction, statistics that the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission provided in July of 2018 reveal that:

- 30% of Oregon youth charged with Measure 11 offenses were charged in Multnomah County. 70% of those 1,201 cases were for Assault I and II and Robbery I and II.
- Just over 80% of Multnomah County youth charged as adults with Assault in the First Degree, and approximately 62% of Multnomah County youth charged as adults with Assault in the Second Degree, were youth of color.
- Similarly, 73% of Multnomah County youth charged as adults with Robbery in the Second Degree were youth of color.

Clearly, the percentage of youth of color being charged, prosecuted and sentenced as adults is significantly disproportionate to the percentages of youth of color in our population.

While disparities exist at all decision points in the juvenile justice system, the collateral consequences of adult prosecution and sentencing for youth of color are especially problematic. Studies show that

Black and Brown children prosecuted as adults are more likely to commit suicide or have psychotic symptoms, to re-offend once they are back in their communities, to experience barriers to access to treatment, education and members of their support network, as well as barriers to employment and housing.

Senate Bills 969, 966, 1008 and 968 seek to remedy the discrepancy between Oregon's current public policy and modern science related to youth justice for all Oregon youth, but specifically for Oregon's youth of color. On behalf of Multnomah County, I urge your support of these youth justice reform bills.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Submitted by:

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