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M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Honorable Rep. Janelle Bynum, Chair

FROM: Aaron Knott, MCDA Policy Director

SUBJECT: Testimony re: HB 2169 -1

DATE: 3/17/21

SUMMARY

HB 2169 -1 is the product of the Governor's Racial Justice Council, a community driven process centering Black, Indigenous, Latinx and immigrant voices in the advancement of deep systemic change to a criminal justice system that all too often falls heaviest along racial and ethnic lines. Nationally, black men are nearly six times more likely to be incarcerated than white men. Latino men are nearly three times as likely. Native Americans, nearly double.

The -1 Amendments were released the day prior to this hearing and our office has not had time to review them fully. As such, we are unable to take a position on the bulk of the various proposals contained within. We did, however, wish to submit this testimony even during our review process – both to express our appreciation for the process that generated this legislation and to specifically note our support for the proposed investment in restorative justice programming and services.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Restorative justice is a community based alternative to addressing crime, even serious crime. Restorative justice seeks to address the harms caused by crime through accountability, the making of amends and – if all parties agree – facilitated restorative dialogue between survivors and those who have offended against them. The restorative justice process is extensive and intense for those who choose it, often involving a year or more of focused and mediated work to address the wrongs inflicted. Studies of restorative justice programs have consistently shown higher rates of victim

satisfaction and lower rates of subsequent recidivism than many comparable systems based programs. But these programs depend on the existence of fully funded community based organizations to do this work – by their very nature, restorative justice programs function far less well when directly embedded into the formal criminal justice system.

There are organizations in Oregon who are experienced in this work, but they lack necessary resources. At the same time, the Criminal Justice Commission is well positioned to help Oregon policymakers to better understand what restorative justice is, how it functions, and how it stands to improve our own criminal justice system. We support this crucial investment.

Contact: Aaron Knott – Policy Director (aaron.knott@mcda.us).