

April 14, 2021

Senator Betsy Johnson, Co-Chair
Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair
Representative Dan Rayfield, Co-Chair
Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Co-Chair Johnson, Co-Chair Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair Rayfield and Members of the Committee,

I write you to express my full support of Gresham's request for funding outreach, prevention and intervention services for youth and families in Gresham. As the Executive Director of Family of Friends Mentoring, I can attest to the challenges our communities are facing. Longstanding systemic barriers coupled with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have negatively affected the physical, social, and economic wellbeing of our clients. Propelled by these difficult realities, and with added urgency as the incidence of community violence rises, we must act now.

Investing in relationships, providing alternatives to violence, and intervening with the resources families need – these are the strategies that work. I have seen it. With Gresham's unique role as a convener, and with a right-sized investment in services, organizations like Family of Friends will be able to work together more effectively to meet the community's needs. It will change lives.

The Oregon Legislative Assembly has an opportunity here to demonstrate the effectiveness of investing in upstream services as a way to improve public safety outcomes and impact the quality of life for those in need. Thank you for considering this critical funding request.

Sincerely,



Michelle Kosta, Executive Director
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