

February 21, 2021  
House Behavioral Health Committee  
900 Court St. NE, Rm. 453  
State Capitol  
Salem, OR, 97301

Dear Members of the House Behavioral Health Committee,

I urge you to vote YES on HB 2417, a bill that will provide \$10 million in state matching grants to support the development of mobile crisis intervention programs, based on the CAHOOTS model pioneered in Eugene. Mobile crisis intervention teams, as defined in the bill, provide trauma-informed de-escalation and harm reduction techniques to more appropriately respond to the related crises of untreated mental illness, substance abuse and homelessness that impact all of us here in the Rogue Valley.

Experience has shown that law enforcement does not always provide the most appropriate first response for every situation or individual in crisis. This bill would fund --and thus incentivize-- our cities and counties to implement a proven-effective and less costly alternative.

I have had direct experiences in situations where a mobile crisis team would have been more appropriate, humane, and effective than calling the police. I used to sing on the streets and in the park here in Ashland on Sundays, and interacted with many homeless and mentally ill people who clearly needed help, but I was reluctant to call the police even though they really needed some assistance. Furthermore, I worked in Los Angeles for many years, helping street people get housing. I knew they needed help when in crisis, but also knew that just the sight of police would escalate the situation, not defuse it. This escalation would often involve the person being taken by the police in handcuffs, and being unnecessarily incarcerated. The CAHOOTS model has proven that a trained team can provide intervention that is calmer and more targeted to the needs of troubled persons on the streets.

We can't expect our police to deal with every social situation as well as criminal activity and other emergencies. A CAHOOTS-like model would clear the police dispatchers 911 phone lines and allow them to focus more appropriately. I've talked to people in Eugene, and they tell me CAHOOTS is a real money-saver for the city

Thank you for your attention and leadership on this important bill.  
Sincerely,  
Susan Madley, Ashland, OR