

To: Members of the House Committee On Behavioral Health
Re: Support of HB 2417

As members of the Medford Congregational UCC's Justice and Peace Ministry Team we would like to add our strong support to HB 2417. Along with many other groups in the southern Oregon area, we have been advocating for a mobile crisis intervention team similar to the CAHOOTS model in Eugene for some time now.

There is a tremendous need in the Rogue Valley area, specifically Jackson county, for such program. We have a significant population of houseless people and many folks with mental health and substance abuse issues. At present, these people have limited resources and cries for help are answered by overworked and overwhelmed law enforcement services. These services do not have sufficient, adequately trained, personnel for dealing with those suffering from mental health issues. Furthermore, the Jackson County Jail is running at or near capacity and is simply not equipped to provide for the needs of substance abusers and those with mental health concerns.

Members of our group have attended presentations by the CAHOOTS people and we see clearly that something like this program is needed in Jackson County. We already have energized groups in the valley that are concerned with this issue and could assist with implementation. As with many issues like this, the difficulty becomes obtaining funding to get things going. This bill would provide hope for counties like ours by providing the funding to encourage development and implementation of mobile crisis intervention teams that could address these serious issues and help alleviate the burden on law enforcement and the local jails.

This bill offers hope for counties and groups like ours that wish to see progress on this issue. We sincerely hope you will move this bill forward and eventually enact it into law.

Respectfully,

Peter D. Ware on behalf of the Medford United Church of Christ's Justice and Peace Ministry Team