

February 20,2021

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, Phyllis Wetzel, have had direct experiences in situations where a mobile crisis team would have been more appropriate, humane, and effective than calling the police. I have a 39 year old son who spent more than half of his adult life on probation for drug use. He was never arrested for violent behavior against himself or others. He was arrested many times for loud, sometimes irrational, behavior. He has spent years going in and out of jail and the transition center. When he is released back to probation he is re-assessed for drug and alcohol rehab. He is always referred to outpatient groups, even though everyone knows he needs a long term inpatient recovery program with a mental health component. But, evidently there aren't beds available. The Phoenix counseling Center, Kolpia Counseling, On Track and the Ashland Police all know my son and all know what he needs, but he is never given the correct treatment plan. I have talked with local Police and Mental Health Department and am told that as long as he is on probation he cannot be sent for Mental Health evaluation, but needs to be sent back to jail with any probation violation. As a result of his not getting the help he needs, he now lives in fear of walking down the street, his mental health has deteriorated, being diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder, his life has gotten very small, and he has a very hard time finding employment. He thankfully is not on probation now. Had he been able to have Mental Health professionals come to

his aid when he was having a psychotic event, rather than being sent to jail, I believe his life would be very different.

Thank you for your attention and leadership on this important bill.

Sincerely,

Phyllis Wetzel
Mother, Ashland OR