

Hello, thank you for the opportunity to give testimony regarding the need for expanded mobile crisis services. You will hear many people share why they feel it is important to have the appropriate response for emergency situations. You wouldn't send an ambulance to fight a house fire, and there are more effective ways of dealing with mental health crises than to send police. I am very involved as a volunteer for the National Alliance on Mental Illness Southern Oregon (NAMI SO) and I know that a program like CAHOOTS would be a huge addition to our community. NAMI feels strongly that these mobile crises services should not be run by law enforcement, should be available to everyone and be 24/7. We also appreciate the level of training seen in the CAHOOTS model.

But I'd also like to share a personal perspective. My son has Schizoaffective Disorder and he is currently incarcerated due to his illness. One of our serious fears is that he will have interactions with police after his release, since we have no other resource if he becomes symptomatic. It may seem like an exaggerated fear, but I personally know the mother of the young man who was shot to death in Springfield in 2019. I know of another fatal shooting by police of a mentally ill man in Central Point a few years ago. Neither of these men were attacking or hurting anyone. These are avoidable deaths. I don't want our son to be added to that list. And I am dedicated to bringing other resources to our community before my son has to survive here again...Therefore, I urge you to help determine a fair method of funding this alternative response that is a need across the state.

Thank you for recognizing the complexity and relevance of this issue. NAMI SO stands ready to support and assist in any way we can.

~Meesha Blair of Jackson County