

Paul L Evans
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 20



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 24, 2021

House Committee on Behavioral Health
Oregon House of Representatives
Oregon State Capitol

Ref: HB 2417 "Matching Grant Program to Cities and Counties to Operate Mobile Crisis Intervention Teams"

Dear Colleagues:

Thank you for the opportunity to express my strong support for HB 2417. As a nation, we face a crisis; beyond the obvious COVID pandemic, we are amid a growing mental health crisis. Sadly, Oregon has not been exempted from this ever-increasing problem. Shawn Ryan, Chair of the Legislative Advocacy Committee at the American Society of Addiction Medicine, was recently quoted in the Oregonian as saying, "...The state and federal initiatives to address this issue [mental health] have not been commensurate with the substantial nature of the problem." One does not need to look any further than our Capitol City of Salem to see the prevalence of these challenges.

Increasingly members of our community are hesitant of law enforcement to deal with situations because of fear of escalation. Furthermore, we are putting our local law enforcement agencies in impossible situations, tasking them with responding to mental health-related calls they are not adequately trained to resolve while removing them from more pressing enforcement issues. We cannot expect law enforcement to act as social workers when actual social workers would be better suited to the task. For this reason, I support the efforts of HB 2417 to provide matching grants to counties and cities for the funding of mobile crisis intervention team programs. We have seen such programs successfully implemented in places such as Eugene, where the CAHOOTS program has reduced police responses, when appropriate, by 5-8%.

Furthermore, HB 2417 would allow the local government, through matching grants, to invest in the creation of at least one sobering facility, at least one shelter facility, and at least one crisis center or address other needs for behavioral health supports. These are all critical and urgent needs in my district as well as throughout the state.

HB 2417 is a win, win, win situation for local government, law enforcement, and the mental/behavioral health community. It is time we acknowledge the problem and appropriately fund these critical needs in our communities. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Paul L. Evans".