



Urban League
of Portland

From the Desk of
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Investments in Culturally-Specific Services will Make our Communities Safer

The creation of the Justice Reinvestment program, which will invest public safety resources into culturally-specific organizations across the state, will help keep communities across the state safe, reduce individuals' contact with the criminal justice system, and make Oregon's criminal justice system more equitable. Studies back this assertion up:

"Our models of long-term change over more than two decades indicate that every 10 additional community nonprofits in a city with 100,000 residents leads to a 12 percent reduction in the homicide rate, a 10 percent reduction in the violent crime rate, and a 7 percent reduction in the property crime rate. When we model year-to-year changes in the prevalence of community nonprofits, we find that every 10 additional nonprofits per 100,000 residents leads to a 9 percent decline in the murder rate, a 6 percent decline in the violent crime rate, and a 4 percent decline in the property crime rate." [Community and the Crime Decline: The Causal Effect of Local Nonprofits on Violent Crime.](#)

Culturally-specific organizations have been unable to access Justice Reinvestment resources in the past. This new approach to improving outcomes for historically underserved populations shows Oregon's commitment to making the criminal justice system more equitable. The Justice Reinvestment Equity Program will allow culturally-specific organizations to engage meaningfully with the Justice Reinvestment program for the first time, as systemic barriers have largely prevented them from receiving JRI funds following the program's inception. It won't take away resources from the counties, but will add additional investments to the existing Justice Reinvestment program that cannot wait.

If we are to improve outcomes for communities of color and other historically underserved populations, we must invest in the organizations that are best suited to effectively serve these communities:

"This match creates fewer clients departing prematurely from services, making better use of services and improving mental health outcomes and life skills functioning, plus being retained in services for longer periods of time (Hohman and Galt, 2001). Additional research emphasizes their retention in services and staying involved for longer periods of time." [In Defense of Culturally-Specific Organizations: Understanding the Rationale and the Evidence.](#)

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