



TO: Co-Chair Sollman, Co-Chair Evans, & Members of the Joint Committee on Public Safety
FROM: Emily Cooper, Legal Director, Disability Rights Oregon (DRO)
DATE: February 14, 2023
RE: DRO 's Testimony in Support of SB5505

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee:

Disability Rights Oregon submits this testimony in support of Senate Bill 5505 supporting the Criminal Justice Commission's (CJC) budget request for continued funding for its IMPACTS program. Without future investments, these funds will run out in 2024.

Problem: We have a constitutional crisis in Oregon. People with mental illness are languishing in jail for court ordered mental health services. There is not enough room at the state hospital to provide these critical services. And jails are designed to punish not treat.

How the Problem Impacts People with Disabilities: Every day an individual with serious mental illness spends in jail presents a risk of irreparable harm including death. Last year, [a 22-year-old man died](#) in Washington County jail while waiting for transport to the state hospital.

The Solution: The established stakeholders – ranging from jail commanders to peer advocates - know the solution to this crisis. We need more community behavioral health services like IMPACTS programs that help people recover rather than remain stuck cycling in and out of jail.

The original IMPACTS bill was passed in 2019 to reinvest resources from the criminal justice system into the community mental health system. The IMPACTS has made good on those investments. [CJC's report in December 2022](#) demonstrate the success of this critical funding to date including:

- hundreds of people every quarter were provided with a combination of services based on individual needs including mental health services, substance use treatment, peer mentoring, & employment and housing supports;
- the IMPACTS programs have diverted people from both jail and community hospitals; and
- the IMPACTS work has saved communities thousands of dollars.
 - o For example, since receiving IMPACTS funding and related diversion services, Lincoln County jail has less people languishing in jail saving over \$15,000 a month or \$180,000 annually, if extrapolated.
 - o Deschutes County's IMPACTS program reports that it diverts approximately 35 people per month from the emergency department. It is estimated that the cost savings ranges between \$270,631.20 and \$730,107, annually.

This is not the time to pull back these investments. This month alone, there were over 100 people languishing in jail for mental health services. The highest number in two decades. This constitutional crisis will only exponentially worsen without continued IMPACTS funding.

Disability Rights Oregon (DRO)

For more than 40 years, DRO has served as Oregon's federally authorized Protection & Advocacy System. DRO is committed to ensuring the civil rights of all with disabilities, including those charged with crimes and waiting for court ordered mental health services.