



March 22, 2023

**Sarah Stewart, MNM**  
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To: Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

Re: SB 344

My name is Sarah Stewart and I'm the Executive Director and Kids FIRST, Lane County's Children's Advocacy Center. I also serve as the Victim Services Representative on our Local Public Safety Coordinating Council, the Justice Reinvestment Grant Review Committee, and the Justice Reinvestment Community Based Victim Services Advisory Panel. This work has given me a deeper insight into the Justice Reinvestment program (JRI) and its impact on the public safety system, criminal justice involved individuals, and marginalized populations.

The Justice Reinvestment Grant program is set to sunset in 2024. I urge your support of the -1 amendments to SB 344 which would extend this impactful program.

The Justice Reinvestment Grant program has been successful at reducing the State's prison population, saving tax dollars. The program's data is compelling. In addition to JRI's success at reducing Oregon's prison population, I believe that this investment has been critical in improving public safety across the State. The public safety system isn't effective or efficient when siloed. Local Public Safety Coordinating Councils bring all of us to the table—government, nonprofit, prosecution, defense. These collaborations lead to a more responsive and effective system. The JRI program has also pushed Counties to consider equity and access within their programming, interventions, and sentencing and funded them to actively address issues. This is important to reducing bias and inequities within the public safety system.

Kids FIRST's mission is to provide intervention and advocacy for children who are victims of, or witnesses to, crime. We provide forensic child abuse evaluations and support for children and their families who may have been impacted by abuse or neglect. The primary goal of Kids FIRST is to ensure that children (birth to 18 years of age) suspected to be victims of sexual abuse,



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physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and/or domestic violence are provided with quality evaluative and healing support services in a child-focused setting. The Justice Reinvestment Grant Program provides funding to nonprofit Victim Services programs, including Kids FIRST. This funding allows us to provide these critical services, including evidence-based therapy, to help children and families heal from trauma. This intervention and support lead to improved outcomes for victims of crime, reducing negative health outcomes and, ultimately, reducing costs over time.

At Kids FIRST, we work as a collaborative, multidisciplinary team to respond to child abuse. This work is statutorily required because it's essential to providing quality, trauma-informed care for victims, standardizing child abuse investigations so that those victimized in rural areas of the State have access to the same resources as those in our urban areas, ensuring that victims don't fall through the cracks of an overburdened system, and additionally, holding individuals who harm children accountable. I see Local Public Safety Coordinating Councils as complementary to these efforts. Centers like Kids FIRST receive referrals from law enforcement or ODHS. We see firsthand the impact of victims when public safety is under resourced or is siloed. Fortunately, we also get to witness the system improvements that come out of investments like the Justice Reinvestment Grant program. These improvements are good for victims and for criminal-justice involved individuals.

I urge you support the -1 amendment to SB 344 and extend the Justice Reinvestment Grant Program.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah M. Stewart". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Sarah M. Stewart, Executive Director