



Center for Dispute Resolution and Restorative Justice

Chair Frederick, Chair McLain, and members of the Joint Ways and Means Education Subcommittee,

My name is Dr. Deltra Ferguson. I am the Executive Director of Resolve Center for Dispute Resolution and Restorative Justice of southern Oregon. Resolve helps people manage conflict through mediation, repair harm and build community through restorative justice, and advance peace through resolution education and training.

I am writing with urgency to ask you to keep intact (at \$3,212,461) full funding for Oregon's network of Resolution Centers.

In the ten years that I have served as Executive Director for Resolve of southern Oregon, I have observed a steady decline in funding from the State. From the 2011-13 biennium to the current biennium, Resolve has averaged just a 2% increase per year in base funding. When adjusted for inflation, a diminishing pattern of base funding emerges.

Frankly, it is incredible what Oregon's resolution centers achieve with the current level of funding. Our centers work with adults and with youth in schools and involved with juvenile justice. Over the first 9 months of this year, Oregon centers have provided mediation for 2,892 people (tenants to housing providers) facing the prospect of a court eviction process. Last year alone, Oregon's Centers reached 16,381 people with resolution services and 2,771 adults and youth were provided conflict resolution and restorative justice training.

Oregon's resolution centers are a mixture of nonprofits and programs within municipalities (city or county). The free-standing nonprofit Centers, most in rural counties, have experienced the greatest sustainability challenge—and several have had to close their doors. By contrast, Washington has a robust and healthy network of resolution centers that complements and partners with their court system and saves an immense amount of money for that state.

Public universities have public service as part of their mission. Community resolution and repair is that public service. It is up-stream/money saving work that keeps people out of the courts, keeps youth in school, and keeps justice-involved youth away from adult incarceration.

Oregon's Resolution Centers are now being turned to for housing stability mediation; to stave off eviction, avoid foreclosure, and stabilize manufactured dwelling parks. Adequate investment in community resolution and repair has probably never been so clearly needed.

Thank you for your thoughtful contemplation of this requested support, and for your leadership. I am available for any questions you may have.

Deltra Ferguson, PhD  
Executive Director, Resolve



Center for Dispute Resolution and Restorative Justice

Resolve has been serving the people of Jackson and Josephine counties and surrounding areas for nearly 33 years. Resolve Center for Dispute Resolution and Restorative Justice of southern Oregon helps people manage conflict through mediation, repair harm and build community through restorative justice, and advance peace through resolution education and training.

In rural southern Oregon, we know our neighbors. We see people we know every time we go shopping, to a school function, or to an evening out on the town. Building and maintaining community is crucial and tangible for the people who live here.

**Mediation is** a voluntary, confidential process where people in conflict meet with a mediator in a private and neutral setting to resolve their differences.

Through mediation and restorative justice people find solutions that come from listening, connecting and understanding. The power to find ways to solve problems without turning to a judge, authority, or law to make decisions, has appeal for rural people who feel pride in self-reliance.

Resolution services offer the promise of an upstream solution that is cost effective and complementary to existing avenues for justice. Mediation and restorative justice create a range of responses to settle dispute and repair harm beyond litigation and punitive justice. Greater housing stability, safer schools, functional workplaces, and connected neighborhoods are outcomes of conflict resolution and non-punitive accountability.

**Restorative Justice is** a practice used to build relationships and strengthen community, and to encourage accountability and repair harm when wrongdoings occur.

Oregon needs to invest in community resolution services. The current level of state funding is not sustainable. With sufficient funding Resolve will be able to hire more professional staff, expand our physical presence to services in Josephine County, support renters, landlords, and property owners through mediation to stabilize housing, bring restorative justice skills to our educators to keep kids in school, work together with justice professionals and courts for accountability and victim needs, and keep people away from systems of incarceration.

Reduce costly litigation, incarceration, and housing instability. Make an investment in community resolution for the people of Oregon.