

Richard L. Withers
1829 5th Street,
Hood River, Oregon 97031

February 11, 2025

Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Oregon State Legislature
Sub-committee on Public Safety

Re: HB 5005

In support of full CJC funding: Restorative Justice Grant Program

Hon. Co-Chairs Sen. Broadman and Rep. Evans, and Members of the Committee:

I am a volunteer mediator and participant in Restorative Justice programs with Six Rivers Dispute Resolution Center serving Wasco, Hood River, Sherman, Gilliam and Wheeler Counties. I write in full and enthusiastic support of full funding for the CJC's budget and the Restorative Justice Grant Program.

Before retiring and moving to Oregon to be close to family, I practiced law in West Virginia and in Wisconsin. My experience in criminal justice includes both prosecution and defense. In each role, I was keenly aware of the limitations of the criminal courts in satisfying the needs of parties harmed by crime, especially domestic violence, and in meeting the needs of the community for accountability. And, even following a successful prosecution, it was often clear that fines and incarceration would produce little positive future outcomes.

I have recently participated in Circles of Peace, a Restorative Justice model particularly suitable for our rural counties. The case referral from the District Attorney involved a violent altercation and I have been impressed with the process and am confident about long-lasting positive results.

I am also excited to see the work that Six Rivers has done in collaboration with law enforcement, the courts, community resources (mental health and other social services), the Tribes and many other community players in developing this model.

Continued funding will provide us with the knowledge and experience to allow 'scaling up' Oregon's Restorative Justice efforts. The results will not only ease the burdens on the Courts, but will promote peace and well-being in our communities.

Thank you for this opportunity to share with you in your deliberations.

Very truly yours,

Richard L. Withers

Cc. Rep. Jeff Helfrich
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