

**To:** Public Safety Subcommittee of Joint Ways and Means

**Date:** February 13, 2025

**Re:** Support for HB 5005 & the Restorative Justice Grant Program

Co-Chairs Broadman and Evans, and members of the committee,

My name is Scott Smith, and I am the Director of Restorative Justice at Neighbor to Neighbor, which is a community dispute resolution center serving Marion, Linn, Benton and Yamhill counties. I am also an active member of the Restorative Justice Coalition of Oregon. Thank you very much for the opportunity to share with you today about the CJC budget, and specifically the Restorative Justice Grant Program.

The Restorative Justice Grant Program was created by the legislature in 2021, and the CJC was able to make the first grants in 2022, so it is still a young program. I feel honored to share with you today some of the outcomes it is already having throughout the state, which validate the initial investment, and give compelling reasons to continue and expand this investment. Seven programs have been receiving funding from the RJGP since 2022, and five of those are new programs that were able to get started only because of this grant program; the other two expanded significantly because of it.

Restorative Justice is a needs-based approach to addressing crimes, and can often meet the needs of victims and communities, for safety, healing, information and

resolution, better than an adversarial court process. At the same time, it can meet the responsible person's needs to understand the impacts of their actions, make amends, and take steps to ensure they will not cause similar harms in the future.

Already, these programs are demonstrating results that align with studies in other regions:

- Crime victims who participate in the restorative process overwhelmingly report being satisfied that justice was done and that they would recommend this process to others who have been harmed
- Failure rates in these diversions are much lower than is typical for other types of diversion or specialty court
- Precise cost savings to the public are difficult to determine, but it is already certainly in the millions of dollars, and as public partners increase their usage of restorative justice options, the savings will also increase. Please contact me if you'd like a breakdown of how we can get a ballpark for that savings
- The programs are not old enough to take a 3-year measure of recidivism, but the CJC's analysts are helping us position our programs to be able to provide that data later, and currently responsible parties are reporting an increase in factors that correlate with lower recidivism, such as empathy for victims, connection with their community and family, and a sense of plans for the future.

The CJC administers many other important programs, and I support that funding as well. Some of those other programs are much higher-profile and much more expensive, so please remember from the testimony today that the Restorative Justice Grant Program is also quickly becoming an essential piece of public safety in a wide variety of communities in our state. Also, please read through the written testimony for this hearing, as many other well-informed people have submitted letters about the importance of this grant program.

Thank you for your time and attention to this issue. Knowing restorative justice practitioners and programs around the state as I do, I urge passage of the Criminal Justice Commission budget, and especially urge you to allocate adequate funding to the RJGP so that these community-based, healing and cost-effective alternatives can continue and expand.

*Scott Smith*

Neighbor to Neighbor, Inc

Serving Marion, Linn, Benton and Yamhill counties