



February 26, 2025

TO: Joint Subcommittee on Public Safety

RE: HB 5012 – Policy Option Package 117 (Aid & Assist)

Co-Chairs Broadman and Evans, Members of the Subcommittee,

On behalf of the Association of Oregon Community Mental Health Programs (AOCMHP) I am writing in support of Policy Option Package 117. AOCMHP represents all community mental health programs (CMHP) across the state, each covering a county or group of counties, and one tribal CMHP, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. CMHPs are responsible for providing consultations and community restoration as well as treatment services for people who are unable to aid and assist in their own defense.

We support investments for training and technical assistance resources to courts in response to the substantial increase in aid and assist cases over the past three years. Like the judicial system, CMHPs' Aid and Assist funding has not been in line with ongoing increases in caseload. This significantly limits our capacity to divert defendants from criminal commitment and to transition OSH patients to the community. The court and attorneys have so many aid and assist cases that it is virtually impossible to, as required in 161.370(2)(c), have a hearing to discuss all five (5) possible "actions" when a defendant is considered "unable" (dismissal, community restoration, civil commitment, guardianship, OSH) and there is disagreement as to the best path forward. By default, the person is sent to OSH. Unless there are enough judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys and CMHP Aid and Assist staff to support these "Actions" hearings, this will continue.

Thanks for the opportunity to express our support for the Oregon Judicial Department's POP 117.

Sincerely,

Cherryl Ramirez

Executive Director

Association of Oregon Community Mental Health Programs