



# POLK COUNTY

**From the desk of Jeremy Gordon**

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March 13, 2025

Testimony of Jeremy Gordon  
Polk County Commissioner  
Co-Chair, Public Safety and Veterans Steering Committee, Association of Oregon Counties

**Before the Oregon Joint Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Public Safety  
In Support of HB 5004 – Full Funding for Community Corrections (POP 102)**

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

For the record, my name is Jeremy Gordon, and I serve as a Polk County Commissioner and Co-Chair of the Association of Oregon Counties Public Safety and Veterans Steering Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in strong support of full funding for the Community Corrections Cost Study in the Department of Corrections budget.

The 2024 Community Corrections Cost Study determined that the actual cost of supervision is \$18.18 per person, per day. The Governor’s Recommended Budget allocates funding at \$15.09 per day, or 83% of the actual cost. While this represents a significant investment, fully funding the cost study would provide counties with the resources needed to maintain effective supervision levels and program quality statewide.

Community Corrections funding has remained below the cost study recommendation since 2006, which presents challenges in sustaining appropriate caseloads, supervision strategies, and necessary interventions. In Polk County, where over 70% of our general fund is dedicated to public safety, we continually work to balance the needs of law enforcement, corrections, prosecution, and emergency services. Polk County is facing possible FTE reductions in the upcoming fiscal year unless we are able to secure expanded revenues through Community Corrections funding and other revenues. We will be going out for an expansion of our local public safety levy in 2027 to continue operating a system that we feel is effective and important for our community, but local revenue only gets counties so far with a limited tax base, and increasing costs for PERS, cost of living adjustments, and employee benefits.

Funding stability for Community Corrections strengthens the entire public safety system by ensuring effective supervision, reducing recidivism, and promoting long-term public safety outcomes. Extended underfunding does not just impact Community Corrections—it strains the entire public safety system. When probation officers are overextended, offenders are more likely to reoffend, increasing burdens on law enforcement, courts, jails, and behavioral health systems. In a county like Polk—the third-fastest

growing county in Oregon—these impacts compound quickly, and our ability to cover shortfalls with general fund dollars is becoming increasingly untenable.

To put this in real terms, I want to share a few examples of how Community Corrections plays a critical role in public safety and rehabilitation:

### **Preventing a Potentially Dangerous Situation**

A probation officer received an email from a client with a picture that, unbeknownst to him, contained an assault rifle in the background. Recognizing the risk, officers coordinated a search of the client's residence. They discovered a semi-automatic rifle, two handguns, and an illegal mushroom grow. This situation highlights the critical, often unseen work of probation officers. Their proactive fieldwork and home visits remove illegal weapons, drugs, and other threats from our communities, making them safer for everyone.

### **Helping an Individual Rebuild Their Life**

A woman under supervision was struggling with addiction, had lost custody of her children, and was facing additional criminal charges. With the help of her parole officer, she was placed in transitional housing, connected with behavioral health services, and given access to peer support and treatment programs. Over time, she regained custody of her children, secured stable housing, obtained a driver's license, and earned a Peer Support certification, which led to employment.

### **Long-Term Support and Prevention**

Another individual completed Drug Court but failed to fully engage with the program. Shortly after graduation, she relapsed. However, her probation officer stayed in contact with her, encouraging her to seek help. Recognizing her own decline, she returned to treatment, rebuilt her sobriety, and eventually became a Peer Support Specialist. This story illustrates the deep, ongoing relationships probation officers build—ones that extend beyond formal supervision and prevent long-term cycles of recidivism.

These are just a few examples of what is at stake when we fail to fully fund Community Corrections. These programs reduce recidivism, enhance public safety, and help individuals reintegrate as productive members of society.

In closing, we urge full funding of the Community Corrections Cost. Ensuring that counties have the resources to effectively supervise and support individuals in their communities is not just fiscally responsible—it will ensure we are able to deliver the local public safety services our shared constituents expect from all of us.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jeremy Gordon



*Polk County Commissioner*

*Co-Chair, Public Safety and Veterans Steering Committee, Association of Oregon Counties*