



WASHINGTON COUNTY OREGON

Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs Javadi and Nelson, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2056. HB 2056 would close the funding gap identified by the recently published cost study assessing the needs of Community Mental Health Programs (CMHPs). Washington County values our partnership with the state to deliver critical mental health programs that support our most vulnerable community members. At a time when our county budget is facing immense strain, it is more important than ever that we have the state funding we need to deliver the mental health services the state requires us to provide.

In 2024, the Legislature passed HB 4092, which required the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to complete a cost study to determine the true cost of CMHP services. The initial report was published on January 25th and demonstrated a \$64.8 million gap between the funding level proposed in the Governor's Recommended Budget and the actual cost of delivering community mental health services locally. Improving access to effective behavioral health services for community members continues to be a shared priority for Washington County, the Legislature, and the Governor, but without the necessary resources we simply will not be able to make progress in addressing the needs of Oregonians.

In Washington County, we rely on state investment in our CMHP to coordinate behavioral healthcare through our network of community providers, as well as provide civil commitment services, and protective services. Our Behavioral Health Resource Network provides a range of essential behavioral health services, and our staff work directly with community members to help them access programs that meet their specific needs. Our Hawthorne Walk-in Center, for example, serves as a starting point for individuals struggling with mental health and addiction where we offer behavioral health assessment, crisis counseling, education regarding mental health and addiction, peer support, and connections to treatment providers and other social services. We also work with people who are potentially a danger to themselves and others and help determine whether they should be committed. Our staff also partner with law enforcement to coordinate Extreme Risk Protection Orders to ensure that individuals who are found to be a threat to themselves or others do not have ready access to firearms. These are the types of services that would be under-resourced without passage of HB 2056.

Washington County is facing a \$20 million budget shortfall for the upcoming fiscal year, so without sufficient state funding, we will not be able to backfill the necessary resources and meet the needs of our communities. While we recognize that the state may also be facing budgetary challenges, we urge you to prioritize this critically needed investment in community mental health programs. Investments made in previous biennia are not keeping up with the increase in demand across all of our mental health services. These investments are critical to both supporting our community members and the workforce that is supporting our community members with the highest level of need.

With that, Washington County respectfully requests your support for HB 2056 to support Community Mental Health Programs.

Thank you,

Pablo Nieves-Valenzuela
Government Relations Manager
Washington County

Contact Information: (971)-917-6953 | Pablo_Nieves-Valenzuela@washingtoncountyor.gov