

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

My name is Stephanie Damon-Moore and I am a chief attorney at the Metropolitan Public Defender in Portland. **I am writing in support of the Criminal Justice Commission's Restorative Justice Grant Program and I am asking this committee to allocate \$8 million for the next biennium to this essential program.** The CJC's Restorative Justice Grant Program provides critical funds for restorative justice programs across the state that center the needs of crime survivors and that keep the community safe by addressing the underlying causes of criminal behavior, by fostering real accountability for those who have caused harm, and by meaningfully tending to the trauma crime survivors experience. **It is important that this grant program remain funded and that it have stability in funding by being included in the Criminal Justice Commission's current service level budget.**

Funding restorative justice is important because it provides real, meaningful opportunities to heal and needed services for victims. As a public defender, I have a front row seat to criminal legal processes that don't address what victims really want. Everyone is different, so a system that is flexible and takes time to understand victim needs is critical. What the current mainstream system does is funnel everyone through the same process, pumping out jail, prison, and/or probation outcomes regardless of what the victim wants or what will actually make society safer. The restorative justice process involves time and conversation to understand what is needed to heal victims and allow them to put traumatic experiences behind them.

So often, what victims express is that they would like (1) to understand why a bad thing happened to them; and (2) to feel assured that it won't happen to them or to anyone else in the future. The system as it currently stands does not provide for either of these two things. Often even the defendant walks away from a case not understanding why they made the choices they made or how to act differently in the future. A system that takes time to listen to people, understand why crime occurs, and provide defendants with the accountability and services necessary for them to change their lives in meaningful and sustainable ways is the key to true public safety.

To date, the Oregon legislature has invested \$8 million to support fifteen restorative justice programs. Approximately half of these programs have received funding since the Restorative Justice Grant Program's first application cycle in July of 2022. The other half are new programs, which received planning grants for the beginning of 2025 to develop the concept for their pilot programs. These 15 programs span a significant portion of the state, serving 17 different counties with one program accepting cases from anywhere in the state.

In 2024, the legislature invested \$4 million in the CJC's Restorative Grant Program for a one-year period, with the possibility of a three-month extension for established programs. \$2.7 million went to continue the seven established programs with \$1.3 million distributed to eight new programs seeking to expand access to restorative justice to other communities around the state. Based on these numbers, it is evident that an increased allocation is necessary to support the continued growth of the established programs and to provide an opportunity for the planning grant programs to move into their pilot stage. **I am requesting that you recognize the importance of these programs and the value they lend to Oregon's public safety system by allocating \$8 million to the Criminal Justice Commission's Restorative Justice Grant Program and by including this grant program in the CJC's current service level budget.**

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. Please help Oregon maintain its place as a leader in restorative approaches to harm, by investing \$8 million in these healing and transformative programs.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Damon-Moore

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