

Lane County Sheriff's Office

Clifton G. Harrold, Sheriff



March 25, 2025

Members of the Joint Committee on Public Safety:

Lane County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) strongly urges continued funding of the Illegal Marijuana Market Enforcement Grant Program (IMMEGP) by the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission. Due to inadequate funding, LCSO currently employs less than half the number of enforcement deputies (.21/1000 population) as compared to the average (.43/1000 population) of Oregon sheriff's offices. This disparity requires LCSO Patrol Deputies to spend their time responding to in progress emergencies with very little opportunity to proactively investigate criminal activity. The LCSO detective unit is laden with picking up that gap amidst an already heavy workload. Investigating and shutting down large complex illegal marijuana operations requires detective level personnel dedicated to lengthy complex investigations. Prior to IMMEGP funding LCSO did not have any resources available to address large scale marijuana operations that we knew were operating with impunity in Lane County.

Prior IMMEGP funding allowed LCSO to dedicate three detectives to look for the most egregious operations and pursue required search warrants to shut them down. These large operations often require considerable staff to eradicate the plants or illegal material being processed and can necessitate overtime hours outside normal patrol assignments. IMMEGP funds the overtime wages for the essential manpower required to execute these operations.

The size and complexity of these operations at times is shocking and many have had ties to international criminal organizations. Human trafficked workers have been found living in deplorable conditions and often not being compensated despite the promise of payment at the end of the growing season. The locations are often hazardous due to unsafe electrical wiring and chemical use. Several illegal butane extraction labs have been identified and shut down that would have otherwise continued to be a hazard to our residents. Most of the illegal marijuana operations have had significant environmental impacts, to include soil and water contamination.

The detectives funded by IMMEGP have developed strong partnerships with other local, State and Federal agencies who help mitigate the impacts of the illegal marijuana market. Our detectives have worked on complex cases that have reached well beyond Lane County and involved other counties and states. Cooperation between land use officials and the State Water Master have helped mitigate damage done by large scale operations that often show no concern for negative environmental impact. The Oregon Liquor Control Commission has worked with our detectives to address licensed operations who are grossly out of compliance and operating criminally.

The success of this program over the last two years resulted in the following statistics:

Plants destroyed: over 100,000

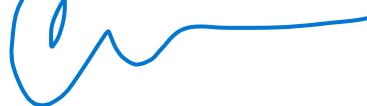
Guns seized: 74

Other drugs seized: Approximately 10 pounds of Methamphetamine, 1.6 pounds of Cocaine, and 2.5 pounds of Fentanyl

Arrests: 56

The Lane County Sheriff's Office is grateful to have received the IMMEGP funding that established a dedicated investigative team resulting in substantial seizures and arrests. Our Office hopes to continue participating in this program so that Lane County and partners can intervene in these operations and hopefully deter others from becoming established in our community. Unfortunately, these critical efforts will only be possible with the dedicated funding provided and we encourage the continued support of this program.

Sincerely,



Clifton G. Harrold
Lane County Sheriff

