

Submitter: Libby Szymczak

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Public Safety

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5005

Co-Chairs Broadman and Evans, and members of the committee,
My name is Libby Szymczak and I am a Outreach Specialist at Stand-in Restorative Justice. 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 importance because...

- Restorative justice provides victims and survivors with a valuable option for healing and accountability.
- Restorative justice is an effective public safety approach that supports community integration.
- Oregon needs more approaches to harm that do not involve incarceration or conviction.
- Restorative justice promotes community, public safety, and healing for survivors of harm.
- There are strong benefits for everyone involved: the survivor, the person responsible for the harm, and the broader community.
- Community based alternatives to prosecution are dramatically less expensive than the current system.
- Developing community based alternatives is important for addressing the unrepresented crisis and reducing the burden on our court system.
- Restorative justice empowers people to acknowledge, take responsibility for and work towards repairing the harm they caused. This leads to true accountability and reduced recidivism.
- There is a strong interest in restorative justice alternatives across the entire state of Oregon. Both urban and rural areas of Oregon are benefiting from the CJC's Restorative Justice Grant Program.

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,
Libby Szymczak