

April 1, 2025

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

I am writing to express my strong support for 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. As someone who deeply values equity, healing, and justice, I recognize the profound impact that restorative justice has in transforming lives, reducing harm, and fostering true accountability in our communities.

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 remains funded and that it has stability in funding by being included in the Criminal Justice Commission's current service level budget.

Restorative justice programs provide an evidence-based alternative to punitive approaches, focusing on healing for survivors, meaningful accountability for those who have caused harm, and community-led solutions that address root causes of crime. By centering the voices of those most impacted and facilitating dialogue, these programs help to break cycles of incarceration, reduce recidivism, and rebuild trust within communities.

The funding from this grant enables critical initiatives across Oregon, ensuring that restorative justice services are available across the state. These programs are particularly vital for marginalized communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the criminal legal system. By investing in restorative justice, Oregon is taking a necessary step toward a more just and equitable future—one that prioritizes healing over punishment and repair over retribution.

Funding restorative justice is important 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.**

I urge you to continue funding these transformative programs. The positive outcomes—reduced incarceration rates, increased survivor satisfaction, and stronger, more resilient communities—demonstrate the necessity of sustained investment in restorative justice.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your commitment to justice and urge you to allocate the necessary resources to ensure these programs thrive.

Sincerely,

Jane Backen