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

My name is Danielle DeCant, and I am a Deputy District Attorney in Hood River, Oregon. I write to request that the subcommittee appropriate \$8 million for Restorative Justice (RJ) and have RJ become part of the CJC's current service level budget.

My office regularly refers criminal cases to our community partner Six Rivers Dispute Resolution Center's Circles of Peace RJ Program. This program is an asset to our community because it provides an avenue for resolving harm that is not otherwise available. It promotes community safety by mending the social fabric that is damaged when harm occurs. It creates a space where people can acknowledge that they have caused harm and work on developing skills that prevent harm from occurring in the future.

This is in direct contrast to our current adversarial practice, which exasperates the damage to social fabric by pitting the defendant against the state. A person who caused harm is at a disadvantage if they say, "I'm sorry" or "I caused harm." Whereas they are advantaged if they refrain and deny responsibility for their actions. Criminal cases can languish for years, stigmatizing victims and defendants, and deteriorating community bonds. RJ incentives swift accountability and reduces recidivism through reintegration. It allows space for disapproval of another's actions but focuses on inclusion and forgiveness rather than punishment and isolation. The process itself teaches skills like empathy, non-violent communication, and emotional regulation. Many people that interact with the criminal legal system lack these skills, which can prevent future interaction with the legal system.

Another important aspect of RJ processes is that they provide a space where victims can explore their own healing. This is not an option in our traditional process, which is defendant focused and based. People who cause harm have often experienced harm. RJ practices allow avenues for all people connected to harm to heal, rebuild social connections, and increase safety. Continued funding for the CJC's RJ Grant Program will allow this important work to continue.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Best,

Danielle DeCant
Deputy District Attorney
Hood River County District Attorney's Office