

Co-Chair Broadman, Co-Chair Evans, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tristen Edwards and I am a public defender and an active member of the Restorative Justice Coalition of Oregon or RJCO. I am testifying in support of the Restorative Justice Grant Program and am here to request that the legislature include this program in the CJC's current service level budget with an \$8 million allocation for the next biennium.

Last session RJCO published a report that focused on data related to models of restorative justice that were currently being implemented in Oregon. The Restorative Justice Grant Program made its first grant awards in 2022, which is when most of Oregon's restorative justice programs began, so data from the programs themselves was not available at the time. The report indicated that these models of restorative justice lead to - reduced rates of re-offending, high levels of survivor satisfaction, and long term cost savings. Though these programs are still embedding themselves in their communities and working through the challenges attendant to starting a new program, early results are aligned with this data and we are beginning to see the promise of restorative justice being realized in Oregon communities. I'd like to offer two examples:

The Emerging Adults Program or EAP in Deschutes County started with a small pilot in 2021. When additional resources became available through the Restorative Justice Grant Program, Deschutes was able to significantly expand their program, making it accessible to more people and providing more intensive support to enrolled participants. EAP has tracked re-arrest data throughout its lifetime and observed only a 9% re-arrest rate from 2021 through the end of 2024. According to the CJC dashboard, re-arrest recidivism in Deschutes County in 2021 for people ages 18-30, which encompasses the age range EAP serves, was 66.7%. It is important to note that EAP's data does not meet the statutory definition of recidivism because it is not restricted to a three-year timeline, however, the stark contrast in these numbers gives me confidence in saying that restorative justice is having a positive impact on recidivism in Central Oregon.

In Multnomah County, the Restorative Roots Project has experienced a high level of success addressing more serious crime types. Though the Restorative Roots Project's sample size is smaller than Deschutes, I think it is worth noting that to date, RRP has not had a single participant fail out of the program and they have not had any participants recidivate after graduating from the program. Every single harmed party that has participated in the Restorative Roots Project has reported feeling like justice was served. The Restorative Roots Project also supports the proposition that restorative justice leads to cost savings as they have helped avoid over 600 months of prison time, which translates to over \$3 million in cost savings. That dollar amount does not take into account court costs, attorney time, or post-prison supervision. It also doesn't account for the other societal

costs that result when someone re-enters society from prison, typically with the same needs they had before their incarceration.

Investing in Oregon's restorative justice programs means investing in survivor healing, in genuine accountability that leads to better public safety, and in a shift in how we view harm that will help the state reduce its reliance on incarceration.