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April 2, 2025

Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Public Safety
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Subject: Letter of Support for Increased Appropriations to the Criminal Justice Commission for Restorative Justice Grant Funding

Dear Co-Chairs Broadman and Evans, and Committee Members:

I am writing in support of Restorative Justice Coalition of Oregon's request to increase the allocated amount of funding for the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission's (CJC) Restorative Justice Grant Program beyond \$4 million.

The CJC's support of these new programs has enabled Oregon to begin to grow a thriving restorative justice community. Initial grantees received funding to plan, pilot and implement restorative justice programs in the Fall of 2021. In 2024, the legislature invested \$2.7 million in seven of the previously-funded restorative justice programs and \$1.3 million in other communities to plan future restorative justice programs. Even the longest-standing of these programs have just begun to measure their 3-year recidivism rates; increased funding to continue all programs is essential to assess restorative justice outcomes and their impact on community safety.

Restorative Justice Grant Programs statewide are preliminarily showing that restorative justice initiatives for appropriate cases have positive outcomes for communities across Oregon:

- Restorative justice programs can improve community safety and reduce recidivism.
- Alternatives to prosecution can be less expensive than utilizing the criminal justice system.
- Restorative justice allows victims and survivors to be heard which can promote healing for harmed parties and accountability in responsible parties.
- Diversion programs are an important part of a multifaceted and scaled prosecution strategy.

Restorative justice programs are an important complement to traditional criminal justice work and support state goals of reducing recidivism. For instance, the Deschutes County District Attorney's Emerging Adult Program's (EAP) preliminary program data shows only a 12% recidivism rate for participants and an 81% graduation rate. By reducing recidivism through restorative justice programs, like the EAP, Oregon can make long-term progress toward improving community safety and reducing criminal justice partner workloads.

An increase in funding to the CJC's Restorative Justice Grant Program would allow the legislature to see

longer-term impacts of its initial investments in community safety both by continuing to support the growing existing programs and ensuring the new planning grantees have an opportunity to move to implementation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Steve Gunnels

Deschutes County District Attorney