



April 3, 2025

TO: Co-Chairs Broadman and Evans and members of the Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee On Public Safety

FROM: Association of Oregon Counties Legislative Affairs Manager, Jessica Pratt

RE: Support HB 5005 and \$46.9M for county and tribal deflection programs

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

On behalf of the Association of Oregon Counties, representing Oregon's county governments, I am writing in support of HB 5005, including \$46.9M for county deflection programs.

County boards of commissioners are the Local Mental Health Authority, providing oversight of our state-county shared services and coordination between local human services and public safety partners.

Last year, the Legislature passed HB 4002 to respond to the growing crisis related to uncontrolled illicit drug use. It created a new misdemeanor for possession of a controlled substance and tasked counties with creating deflection programs that connect appropriate individuals to substance abuse treatment in lieu of citation.

These deflection programs are funded via grants from the CJC and are statutorily required to have the participation of the district attorney, law enforcement, the Community Mental Health Program and a Behavioral Health Resource Network provider.

Twenty-eight counties applied and were awarded one-year grants for planning and implementation. These programs have become operational over the last few months, several as late as January of this year.

The Association of Oregon Counties just completed a survey to understand the projected costs for deflection in the next biennium and, crucially, the funding needed to yield the health and safety outcomes these programs were created to achieve.

HB 4002 provided maximum flexibility in program design so counties could make the most of existing infrastructure and minimize the program's costs. As a result, their design is extremely lean.

We want to thank the Governor for including deflection program funding in her recommended budget and for her partnership with counties in addressing the ongoing housing and addictions crises.

However, the cost to maintain basic program integrity is more than the \$40 million dollars recommended in the Governor's budget and comes to \$46.9 million dollars when factoring in the set-aside for tribal programs.

\$46.9 million is the funding needed for the basic infrastructure to meet statutory requirements and make the programs operationally sound, and include the costs only for:

- the coordination of local partners - the District Attorney, law enforcement, and local behavioral health providers -
- case management and data tracking,
- staff and law enforcement training,
- equipment, supplies and administration, and in some counties,
- temporary housing and basic needs supports to give participants who are unstably-housed a fighting chance to graduate the program.

Additional needs identified by deflection coordinators but not included in this funding request are primarily for housing supports like rent assistance, sober living, residential treatment, detox, and Crisis Stabilization Centers.

We ask for your support for \$46.9 million for county and tribal deflection programs and thank you for partnering with AOC and counties to serve all of Oregon.

Jessica Pratt
Legislative Affairs Manager
Association of Oregon Counties