



Co-Chair Prozanski, Co-Chair Kropf, and Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Pablo Nieves-Valenzuela, and I am a government relations manager for Washington County. I am writing in support of the -1 amendment, and in opposition to the -2 amendment, for HB 3069. We support the -1 amendment because it would improve the efficiency of the Criminal Justice Commission's (CJC) grantmaking process. While Washington County supports legislation directing CJC to develop a new funding formula for deflection, we believe that several other provisions of the -2 amendment would create adverse incentives that reduce the effectiveness of county programs.

We greatly appreciate the bill sponsor's commitment to simplifying CJC's grant administration, and the application process, through the -1 amendment. These policy changes will streamline the process of securing grant funding for counties. They will also allow the CJC to focus their time and attention on providing technical support when needed. Consolidating the CJC's grant application and review process is a critical step forward as we aim to modernize and strengthen our criminal justice system.

In Washington County, we are extremely proud of the work we have done to create a path to recovery through our deflection program. In only eight months, we have seen our program change lives. Our deflection program has served over fifty individuals, with nearly one-third never having previously received behavioral health services. Individuals will no longer have to face a criminal record or courtroom proceeding and will move forward on their recovery journey with a solid foundation, stable employment and housing.

Section 2 in the -2 amendment would tie deflection funding to the number of participants deflection programs are projected to serve; this has the potential to incentivize counties to prioritize increasing the quantity of projected participants above the quality of engagement with these participants. The [Oregon Behavioral Health Deflection Program Best Practices Report](#) has identified the [Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion \(LEAD\) model](#) as a best practice.

Washington County's program incorporates many of the strategies included in the LEAD model, including longer term engagement with program participants with substance use disorders and a focus on addressing the underlying factors driving criminogenic and disruptive behaviors.

Without a significant increase in funding for deflection programs, Washington County does not

have the resources to provide robust case management and wrap-around support services over an extended period of time for a large number of community members.

We are also concerned with the language in Section 1 that would create a competitive process for 70% of the funding without sufficient evidence for weighing the strengths and weaknesses of various programs. One of the key strengths of deflection efforts in our state has been the high level of collaboration. While Washington County is likely to perform well in a competitive grant process, the larger system may suffer without the mutual support and idea-sharing that has defined our progress. Underfunded programs may falter, reducing overall momentum and enthusiasm for deflection as a statewide initiative. While we appreciate the information provided in the Criminal Justice Commission's (CJC's) best practices report, we do not believe there has been enough time to build an understanding of how to implement them successfully, or to finish identifying other practices that should be incorporated into deflection programs. By encouraging counties to base their programs on previously identified best practices, we are likely to see less innovation from counties seeking solutions that meet the needs of their respective communities.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on these proposed amendments and look forward to further conversation about how to establish incentives that strengthen county deflection programs.

Thank you,

Pablo Nieves-Valenzuela
Government Relations Manager
Washington County