

Testimony by Kay Toran – Volunteers of America Oregon

To the Joint Committee on Public Safety

April 5, 2013

Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee

My name is Kay Toran and I am President/CEO of Volunteers of America Oregon. We are a comprehensive, broad-based human services non-profit. Included in our social services portfolio we administer several programs that focus on the high-risk populations in our community. These are individuals who have had some criminal involvement in their lives and have been convicted of a crime. I am here today to testify in support of the Oregon Public Safety Package, HB 3194.

HB 3194 is important to my organization because we support efforts to transform Oregon's public safety system. We do so because through our programs that use evidence-based practices we have been able to demonstrate effective methods of working with this high risk population and achieving stellar results.

We believe, because we have demonstrated it, that it is possible to hold people who commit crimes accountable while maintaining a high level of public safety with increased efficiencies in the criminal justice system.

VOA Oregon encourages you to pass a bill that reinvests in alternative programs that have proven results.

As examples, Volunteers of America Oregon has two such programs that I want to describe here this afternoon that are a part of our Treatment and Public Safety divisions.

In collaborations and partnerships with other community-based programs we have demonstrated that it is doable to keep public safety as a high community goal; to ensure accountability and to support the high risk populations becoming successful individuals within our community.

Community Partner Reinvestment Program (CPR) offers comprehensive coordinated re-entry support for the highest risk of young male offenders (18-25) returning from prison to the community.

A five-year independent evaluation (2005-2010) conducted by Portland State University indicated:

- 75.2% were not reconvicted of a new felony
- 61.8% were either employed or attending school at the six month follow-up.

This resulted in an estimated cost savings of more than \$1.35 million for this group of 58 young men based on the median cost of \$6,100 for a CPR participant. CPR has achieved similar outcomes with nearly 500 individuals since 2005.

CPR has also been replicated locally to treat young men in the jail population in Multnomah County.

Multnomah County Sheriff's office data demonstrates an average of half as many days in jail the year participants are in the program than the year prior. They reported savings for the first year of the program a total of \$418,000 which served 31 men.

The services we provide include:

1. Comprehensive, coordinated re-entry support
2. Pre and post-release services
3. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
4. Substance Abuse Treatment and Education
5. Culturally-competent Mentoring
6. Mental Health and Medication Management
7. Evidence-based practices and tailored curriculum
8. Health lifestyle including Pro-Social Connections, family support, Transitional Planning
9. Multidisciplinary.

To achieve these results VOAOR works in strong collaborations and partnerships with other social services non-profit that are focused on these populations.

The VOA Oregon Re-entry Enhancement Coordination (REC) program steps in as men and women in recovery leave prison. This is when they are at greatest risk of relapsing into the addictions at the root of their criminal behavior.

With supportive housing, addictions treatment and employment services, REC counselors and mentors know that isolation is one of the greatest challenges to staying clean, sober and out of prison.

The REC program is a strong partnership and collaboration with Multnomah County, Probation and Parole, SE Works, Central City Concern and other stakeholders.

In a July 2011 Criminal Justice Commission Offender Re-entry Program preliminary evaluation of Multnomah County participants released from prison May 2009 to September 2010, the following was reported:

Recidivism: REC participants had a 43% reduction in recidivism compared to the control group.

- Control group arrests: 28%
- Reentry grant participant's arrests: 16% (213 clients)

Employment: 74% of REC participants achieved employment within 90 days of release from prison.

Housing Outcome: 845 had independent housing 90 days after release from prison.

Cost Benefit of REC Program:

Benefit to Cost Ratio = \$6.73 (Every \$1.00 spent on REC program = benefit of \$6.73)

Cost of Re-entry program per participant = \$3,419

System & Tax Payer cost avoided = \$8,631

Crime victims cost avoided = \$14,388

These are just two of the successful re-entry programs that are operated by Volunteer of America Oregon.

VOA Oregon and our partners have been able to demonstrate the cost effectiveness of our evidence-based practices. But more importantly our intervention programs have supported the successful re-entry into everyday life of those we serve.

The stakeholders involved in this work have demonstrated what works.

On behalf of VOA Oregon I encourage you to pass a bill that supports reinvesting a portion of corrections savings generated by reforms into victim services, community corrections, addiction and mental health treatment and effective re-entry programs.

Ensuring that we have a strong public safety system is a part of creating the safe and strong communities in which we all want to live.

Thank you very much.