

Central and Eastern Oregon Juvenile Justice Consortium (CEOJJC)

*An intergovernmental organization of the counties of: Baker, Crook, Deschutes, Gilliam, Grant, Harney,
Hood River, Jefferson, Lake, Malheur, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Wasco, Wheeler*

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Written Public Testimony on HB 4134 House Committee on Education February 12, 2014

POSITION:

The Central and Eastern Oregon Juvenile Justice Consortium is an 18 County intergovernmental entity that has been in existence since 1987. The work of the Consortium supports efforts of its member counties to provide effective community-based prevention programs and regional resources to prevent youth from entering into or moving further into the juvenile justice system.

Juvenile departments in the Consortium are also members of the Oregon Juvenile Department Directors Association (OJDDA). OJDDA strongly opposes HB 4134 in its current form.

Members of the Consortium were informed about the new -4 Amendments late last night. Members of the Consortium very much appreciate the willingness of the Speaker and Governor's Office to develop a process for further clarification of all proposed changes to the Juvenile Crime Prevention Initiative (JCP).

If the proposal to have an interim workgroup is adopted, we strongly recommend that the first order of business is to clarify what the term "prevention" actually means. The original definition in the statute was developed with the input of national experts in what program and activities actually prevent juvenile crime and related youth problems.

Member counties of the Consortium are very concerned with what looks to us like a "re-purposing" for funding and shifting priorities away from youth who are at imminent risk of entering and moving further into the juvenile justice system. If these funds are re-purposed to more general youth development efforts, research clearly says they will have limited effectiveness in reducing juvenile crime. These changes could easily result in increasing workloads on county juvenile departments and the Oregon Youth Authority.

The Juvenile Crime Prevention Initiative was originally designed as a system improvement effort. Proposed changes seem to us to be a shift away from the original legislative intent that was to make sure that JCP funds are invested in ways that improve the effectiveness of existing services and programs. Rural counties have very limited resources and need to respond to the needs of at-risk youth and their families when problems are first identified by community agencies. The Juvenile Crime Prevention Initiative has brought many community partners together to do this. This is most often done through community wraparound services team approaches.

The three smallest counties in the state, Sherman, Gilliam and Wheeler, have juvenile departments with one staff member, the director. In each of these counties, JCP funds are used to fund a mental health counselor in the schools. This person works in close partnership with the juvenile director and other community partners. Some JCP funding is also used for after-school tutoring. Even in these frontier counties, JCP funds are being used to invest in improving the limited resources for both the schools and the juvenile departments. These close working partnerships between schools in juvenile departments is happening region-wide. Schools in juvenile departments need to work together to achieve mutual goals and outcomes. By themselves, both systems have limited effectiveness with youth who are at imminent risk of entering or moving into the juvenile justice system unless they work together in a team approach.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Representative Hoffman and will Representative Whisnant for their efforts to understand the concerns of rural counties about proposed changes in the direction and funding process for The Juvenile Crime Prevention Initiative.

Thank you the opportunity to provide this written testimony because of time limits and being in the last group to present information to the committee.

Jeff Milligan, Consultant
Central and Eastern Oregon Juvenile Justice Consortium