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DATE: February 4, 2015

TO: House Committee on Business and Labor

RE: HB 2671, relating to the funding of sobering centers

Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee:

The Lane County Board of County Commissioners regularly identifies priorities for each Legislative Assembly. They have identified “alcohol impact funding” as a priority for the past two sessions, and certainly HB 2671 falls within that category. This priority was established after the court reform bills of the 2011 session (HB 2710 and HB 2712). HB 2712 in particular repealed a statute that directed revenue from fines related to OLCC violations to the District Attorney, who utilized those dollars to mitigate the impact of alcohol use within the community.

This action was concurrent to an overall downturn in county general fund due to the decline of federal forest related revenues. Lane County had used those dollars to provide funding for the operation of Buckley House, a local “sobering station” that provides an option for local police agencies who encounter extremely inebriated persons during the course of their work. Due to revenue constraints, in 2013 we formed an ad hoc committee to seek other sources of funding for this important service. Included in that group are Eugene and Springfield, Lane County, and PeaceHealth. Combined, we were able to cobble together funding that was importantly rounded out by the State, in particular the Addictions and Mental Health Division of OHA. Lane County has not identified a sustainable source of funding for this service, but HB 2671 does.

As a result of that collaboration, there was a report back to the Legislature we provided during the December, 2014 interim hearings to Joint Judiciary, and House Health Care. There were several points we emphasized:

- Sobering services are not the same as detox. Sobering is an immediate pre-cursor to detoxification but should be considered to be more linked to policing strategies. Notably, sobering is not defined by statute, nor is it reimbursable under the Oregon Health Plan.
- Sobering is but one element of a suite of services we are terming “crisis array”. These services share a common feature of bringing mental and behavioral health tools to a closer alignment and better utilization for police agencies. We believe police could use these tools in particular with populations that are involved with chronic overuse of police services, jails, and emergency rooms in local communities.

Importantly, HB 2671 defines a sobering center. What it does not do is suggest that these dollars may be used for other impact related services such as DUII enforcement, development of alcohol impact zones, underage drinking prevention, or liquor theft. We urge the Committee to contemplate expansion of the use of the revenue identified in the measure as currently drafted.

SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY