

ECUMENICAL MINISTRIES *of* OREGON

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Testimony to the Public Safety Subcommittee of Ways and Means

My name is Jan Elfers and I am the public policy director of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) is a statewide association of Christian denominations, congregations, ecumenical organizations and interfaith partners representing all parts of the state.

I am here today to testify in support of \$58.5 million for Justice Reinvestment (HB 3194) in the Criminal Justice Commission's budget. Since the passage of HB 3194 in 2013, prison forecasts have shown that the legislation has been largely effective in flat lining prison growth. Sentencing reforms and investment dollars are just beginning to change the trajectory of Oregon's justice system to establish a safety approach that works better, and is less costly. The \$15 million allocated in 2013 to Justice Reinvestment has been distributed to counties to implement services and sanctions at the local level. This is helping to keep Oregon on target to avert future prison construction costs, while the local programs are investing the savings to develop programs that are currently underfunded; addiction and mental health treatment, victim's services and re-entry support for people released from prison and jails.

Reform in our criminal justice system is necessary for both human rights and economic reasons. EMO supported the passage of HB 3194 because foundational to our core values is a belief in the power of restorative justice, which holds that justice is best served when those impacted by crime—the victim, perpetrator and broader community—are given opportunities to constructively engage in the criminal justice system. HB 3194's success depends on Oregon's continued commitment to funding an infrastructure that supports these goals.

Justice Reinvestment sets forth an important blueprint for the future of the criminal justice system in Oregon. Restorative justice challenges us to expand our vision beyond a retributive model of justice that focuses almost exclusively on the inflexible sentencing of the offender, to a more balanced approach that pays attention to the needs of all of those affected by the crime. Justice Reinvestment helps to implement this much-needed balance, and thereby contributes to a more just and sustainable system and safer communities.

The Criminal Justice Commission and the Department of Corrections have determined that \$58.5 is the actual costs averted through the successful implementation of Justice Reinvestment. The Governor's budget designated \$58 million. I urge you to fully fund his request in your budget.

Respectfully,
Jan Elfers