

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 5506
Submitted to the Public Safety Subcommittee of Ways and Means
By Shannon Wight, Deputy Director, Partnership for Safety and Justice
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Co-chairs Shields and Williamson and Members of the Committee:

My name is Shannon Wight and I am the Deputy Director at Partnership for Safety and Justice. Partnership of Safety and Justice is a statewide, non-profit organization that has worked in Oregon for 15 years. We are focused on creating a public safety and criminal justice system that works for everyone. We believe that effective public safety requires being smart about crime by putting accountability first, providing crime survivors with the services they need, and supporting proven strategies to prevent future crime.

Those values drive our work, which is why I am here today on behalf of Partnership for Safety and Justice in support of SB 5506. In particular, we are supporting the \$58.5 million allocation for Justice Reinvestment, 10% of which will be allocated to community-based victim services.

During the 2013 legislation our organization fought for the passage of HB 3194 (the Justice Reinvestment Act), which set Oregon on a new public safety path. If successful, Justice Reinvestment will redirect Oregon's prioritization of public safety dollars away from costly prison beds towards local funding for a range of sanctions and services that will create safer, stronger communities.

Oregon is not the only state involved in reprioritizing public safety spending. Nearly half of the country engaged in a similar process after they too recognized the impact of the overuse of expensive prison beds on their state budgets. We at PSJ are excited that Oregon is one of these states. It's worth noting that Oregon is unique in proving funds for victims as well as people convicted of crime. Beginning in the 2015-17 biennium, 10% of Justice Reinvestment funds will be allocated to community-based nonprofit victim services. Oregon is the first Justice Reinvestment state to recognize that community-based nonprofit victim services are vital parts of our public safety system and deserve additional funding so that more victims can access the safety and support they need.

Right now, Justice Reinvestment is being implemented locally in each of the counties you represent. The Criminal Justice Commission is currently gathering data about last biennium's investments but we know that so far the results have been positive. Some of you know of the successes in your community first hand. The work being done in Marion Country to divert drug and property offenders from prison, for example, is turning into a model for the state. While the five largest counties will have the greatest impact on the number of people sent to prison, local justice reinvestment dollars are creating jobs and greater safety in every county in the state.

To continue the success of this work, counties need to see the continued financial commitment of the legislature to this public safety course correction. There is a striking example that is instructive as we consider future investments for justice reform. In the 1970's in Oregon and across the country state's realized that large-scale mental hospitals were not the appropriate treatment for many of the mentally ill. Hospitals closed with promises of investments in smaller, community-based treatment centers. Those investments were never fully realized. Our prison and jails are now filled with individuals who struggle with mental illness. We must not make that same mistake as we chart this new public safety course.

Passing the policy was step one; making the needed investments for successful implementation is where the rubber hits the road with Justice Reinvestment. We are asking that you fund \$58.5 million for the Justice Reinvestment Grant Program to ensure we create a public safety system that works and gives us the best return on our investment.