



February 10, 2015

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety

From: Paul Solomon, Executive Director, Sponsors, Inc.

Re: HB 3194 Justice Reinvestment Program Funding for FY 15/17

Co-Chair Williamson, Co-Chair Shields and Members of the Committee:

My name is Paul Solomon and I am the Executive Director at Sponsors in Eugene and the vice-chair of Lane County's Public Safety Coordinating Council and I am here today to share my concern and frustration regarding the proposed co-chairs budget for the Justice Reinvestment Program. From both a policy and direct service perspective, I am able to see the impact of the programs that we have started to develop.

Lane County's public safety system has been reeling for years as a result of dwindling federal timber subsidies, conversely, HB 3194 funds have allowed us to restore much needed infrastructure and begin new programs using evidence based practices to drive our service delivery in an effort to reduce recidivism and our dependence on prison beds. We have just begun to make strategic investments with the first round of funding (much of which was used to plug holes after years of reductions to our community corrections funding). We are now poised to make some real changes, provided we receive adequate funding, that will substantially reduce our use of prison beds. I also serve on the HB 3194 Metro RIC that has been tasked with monitoring the counties charge to flat-line prison growth. ***I am here to tell you, we are succeeding, in part as a direct result of the local investments that have been made. Our success means that the state will not be required to add capacity to the prison in Deer Ridge and build a new prison in Junction City at this time.***

I want to share the experience of one young man, I will call, James, who went through Sponsors Justice Reinvestment funded program. James was released from prison early last year, homeless, indigent and assessed as high-risk to re-offend. He had convictions for UUMV, Possession of Meth, and other property offenses. Based on his risk assessment, we developed a case plan and began focusing on the top two criminogenic risk factors, providing cognitive behavioral services and matching him up with a Mentor through our mentoring program. After about a month in our housing program we began to notice a remarkable change in his attitude. No longer was he fighting with us about engaging in programming and started to become a leader in group and with his peers. Shortly thereafter, he got a

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job and a year later, is still employed there. He volunteers in the community and is very much engaged in his recovery and told me recently that he is working hard to become the kind of man that he can be proud of. We all should be proud of him.

The fact is, there are hundreds of men and women just like James who will be either returning to Lane County or entering our criminal justice system and we have a unique opportunity to help them change their lives. Changing lives means fewer victims, healthier families and a more robust economy. If the state falls short on the promise to fully fund (at \$58 million) the Justice Reinvestment Program, I can guarantee you that the decreases in the use of prison beds will reverse, forcing taxpayers to shoulder the burden of the next new prison in Oregon. Please give us the opportunity to continue the work we have started to enhance public safety by funding the Justice Reinvestment Program at the level provided in the Governor's Budget.

Sincerely,



Paul Solomon,
Executive Director