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Sergeant Dave Schmidt, Gresham Police Department
Testimony regarding SB 501, the East Metro Gang Enforcement Team
Senate Human Services and Early Childhood Committee
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Senator Gelser and members of the Committee, I am Sergeant Dave Schmidt, and I lead the East Metro Gang Enforcement Team. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and express the importance of this funding in our coordinated approach to gang enforcement and suppression.

Our seven member, multi-agency team has produced significant progress in this arena. In 2014 alone, the team made 233 felony arrests, seized 82 illegal weapons, and had 1,360 contacts with suspected gang members. Additionally, we documented 96 new known gang members –bringing the total population in the area to around 500 specifically documented gang members. The population of documented gang members is only a fraction of the actual population of gang members, which is likely between 1,500 and 2,500 individuals in our area.

When we consider those numbers, they are not unique to the areas of Gresham, Troutdale, Fairview, and Wood Village served by the East Metro Gang Enforcement Team. Gang members know no jurisdictional boundaries. We routinely deal with people from all across the state in our enforcement activities, and when we do enforcement right in our area, we are also preventing gang activity that would have ultimately been exported to other communities in the state as well.

Not only is the East Metro Gang Enforcement Team critical when it comes to holding the line against gang activity, but it provides an important synergy when it comes to some of our more conventional police services. On any given night, a patrol officer may receive a call for service to a neighborhood or multi-family apartment complex where gang members are known to frequent or reside. In those cases, our gang enforcement team is able to assist in the call, help identify any people with known gang affiliations, and potentially intervene in gang activity that might have otherwise gone unnoticed.

As City Manager Kvarsten noted, the combination of our enforcement and prevention efforts has provided strong results. In 2013 six of our seven homicides in Gresham were gang-related. In 2014, just one homicide was gang-related.

Leading a team with members from four different law enforcement agencies has been a particular honor, and the officers who serve on this team all come with a breadth and depth of knowledge from their communities, which enhances our knowledge and effectiveness. When that is combined with our partnerships with non-profit associations, and the county, state, and federal governments, we are bringing a truly unique approach to the issue and are poised for success.

"In The Company of Heroes"

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today, and for your continued support of this critical service area. When gangs are able to operate without a specific and experienced law enforcement presence, they can take over a community very rapidly, and can use that community as a nucleus for their networks across the state and nation.

"In The Company of Heroes"