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Date: March 10, 2015

To: Chair Gelser and Members of the Senate Human Services & Early Childhood Committee

From: Carla C. Piluso, State Representative, House District 50

RE: Senate Bill 501

Chair Gelser, members of the committee it is my honor and privilege to be here before you today to testify on behalf of continued funding of the East Metro Gang Enforcement Team. I am Representative Carla Piluso, serving House District 50, the City of Gresham and a small chunk of SE Portland. Prior to my legislative service, I was a proud 30 year member of the Gresham Police Department, my last 6 years I served as the Gresham Police Chief.

During my police career I saw many changes and much growth in the City of Gresham and all of east Multnomah County. Let me share a bit of that history.

In 1985 annexation nearly doubled the size of Gresham, literally overnight. Un-intended consequences followed. Gentrification, the need for sewer systems, lack of social services to meet the growing community needs, and increased public safety needs. In 1989, we designated one detective as a gang detective and shortly thereafter our first gang was identified. It was called Posse 91, consisting of white, middle class high school students. Because they did not fit the stereotype we have of gang members, we had great difficulty convincing anyone that the Posse 91 did fit the profile of an active criminal gang and needed to be treated accordingly, including arrest and prosecution. It was time to accept that gang activity existed in Gresham.

In 1990, the Rockwood Safety Action Team was formed; a collaboration of the Gresham Police Department and the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office. Gang and drug related issues were addressed and community partners participated with a focus on prevention. Unfortunately, funding and politics closed that office in just two years.

In the fall of 2004 a bus tour took place in east Multnomah County, east of 162<sup>nd</sup>, focusing on the cities of Gresham, Troutdale, Wood Village and Fairview. Our guests for the tour were elected members of each city and representatives from the legislature at the time. The blight was clearly and quickly recognized by the tour and with subsequent discussions and collaboration with State, County and local government, the East Metro Gang Enforcement Team was birthed and funded by the State of Oregon.

EMGET was officially launched in 2005. As you have heard, the Team is a collaborative effort of many jurisdictions, community advocates, our schools and non-profits. Today, EMGET has a 10 year history of gang enforcement, gang prevention, and gang intervention. The team has

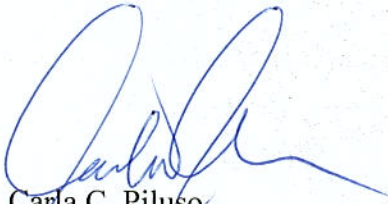


morphed and evolved into a highly respected unit that serves the Multnomah County community. The team's expertise is sought by other agencies throughout our State; by our schools, by our Federal partners, by our district attorney's.

The East Metro Gang Enforcement Team has a ten year track record of success. I ask for your continued support of this highly regarded service. It is an investment in our community and public safety, more important, it is a long term investment in our kids and our families. It is crime prevention by breaking the cycle of violence and the cycle of poverty.

EMGET evolved under my watch as the Gresham Police Chief. I count it as one of my greatest achievements. I strongly ask, implore for continued support of this unit. It is tried and true. It is focused on the success of our community. It is crime prevention. It is hope.

Thank you for your time and attention.



Carla C. Piluso  
State Representative  
House District 50