

DATE: March 17 2015
TO: House Judiciary Committee
FROM: Stacy Michaelson, Association of Oregon Counties
SUBJECT: HB 2420

Chair Barker, Members of the Committee,

For the record, I am Stacy Michaelson, Health and Human Services Policy Manager for the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC). AOC represents the collective voice of county governments across Oregon. I am here today to speak in support of HB 2420.

As counties serve as the Local Mental Health Authority, it is a priority for our organization that, whenever possible, Oregonians receive necessary mental health services in their community. There is a benefit to clients in being served locally, near friends and family, and there is a larger movement within the mental health field of using community-based settings. Further, there are additional costs to the system when individuals are sent to the Oregon State Hospital. Care at the Hospital is not cheap, and there are also travel expenses in transporting Aid and Assist patients to OSH.

While a defendant may not always be able to receive the care they need at the local level, there should always be consideration of whether there is capacity within the local community before sending someone to the State Hospital. Utilizing our local services when possible is in the best interest of clients/defendants and is also the most cost-efficient option for providing care.

This bill represents support for the local work that is being done in our communities and is an important step in improving care and reducing costs. For these reasons, AOC urges your support of HB 2420.

Thank you.