

Testimony for Joint Subcommittee on Public Safety
Oregon State Legislature
May 14, 2015

To: Co-Chair Senator Chip Shields
Co-Chair Representative Jennifer Williamson
Representative Jeff Barker
Representative Chris Gorsek
Representative Wayne Krieger
Representative Gene Whisnant
Senator Alan Bates
Senator Jackie Winters

Co-Chair Shields and Co-chair Williamson and members of the committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify before your committee and for investing \$15 million for Justice Reinvestment during the 2013 legislative session.

My name is Kathy Sévos, and I am the Director of Transition and Reentry Services at Volunteers of America Oregon presenting testimony in support of \$58.5 million for Justice Reinvestment in the Criminal Justice Commission's budget. I oversee several of VOA's programs which serve individuals and their families impacted by their involvement in the criminal justice system. Through Justice Reinvestment resources, VOA works with a coordinated team of providers offering a comprehensive menu of housing, mentors, employment, family and treatment services provided in concert with parole and probation services.

Who we serve. Since 3194 passed, VOA has already provided reentry and transitional services to:

- Over 115 individuals releasing from the Department of Corrections on **Short Term Transitional Leave**;
- Another 125 individuals who were diverted from state prison and placed in VOA's continuum of Residential and Outpatient treatment through the **Multnomah County Justice Reinvestment Program**

Successes. Our newest outpatient program **Moving Forward** - designed for MCJRP population - is modeled after the successful **Reentry Enhancement Coordination (REC)** program. A Preliminary Evaluation of REC (2011) by the Criminal Justice Commission demonstrated:

Recidivism: REC participants had a 43% reduction in recidivism compared to control group
Employment: 74% of REC participants achieved employment within 90 days of release from prison
Housing: 84% had independent housing 90 days after release from prison

Mentors. The most measurable impact is seen by linking evidence-based treatment with wrap-around supports and **professional mentors** who help people create healthy connections and promote better decision-making. For example, our Community Partners Reinvestment (CPR) reentry program added culturally-appropriate mentors who model their own success leaving gangs, crime, drugs and prison which resulted in a surge of the average days engaged in CPR's post-release services (2012):

- **274% increase** for African-American, Hispanic and Native American participants
- **34.4% increase** for White participants

Needs and Challenges. These new services are just getting started and will take time to become truly effective at reducing crime and victimization. The resource needs are vast if we are to follow best practices and create a continuum of care. Additional resource needs include pre-release programming in county jail; a continuum of detoxification, residential and outpatient treatment; mentors to help more individuals navigate systems; assistance for families entrenched in poverty and/or gang activity; and much more supportive housing for short term stabilization and long term recovery. These services are needed for the MCJRP population, as well as the thousands of individuals supervised by our County who are not in the MCJRP.

In conclusion, VOA Oregon supports the request for \$58.5 million for Justice Reinvestment in the Criminal Justice Commission's budget.

Thank you for your time. Respectfully submitted by Kathy B Sévos.