



To: Members of the House Judiciary Committee

From: Sheriff Tim Svenson, Yamhill County Sheriff

Oregon Association Chiefs of Police and the
Oregon State Sheriffs' Association

Date: February 9, 2016

**Re: Support for HB 4116 – Task Force on County Jail
Inmate Health Care Coverage**

Chair Barker and Members of the House Judiciary Committee. My name is Tim Svenson and I am the Yamhill County Sheriff. I'm here today on behalf of the Oregon State Sheriffs' Association and the Oregon Association Chiefs of Police to support the passage of HB 4116. I want to thank the Chair and members of the committee for considering this measure today.

For the last 10 years I have worked very closely with all of our partners in Yamhill County in an effort to reduce the vulnerable population within our jails. As you are aware, this population makes up a large portion of many County Jails, causing budgetary constraints on already tight operating budgets, and most importantly, does not benefit the individual who is sitting inside a jail cell.

In Yamhill County, we developed a work group called the Community Crisis Response Team, CCRT. It consisted of representatives from the DA's office, Community Corrections, local Police departments, Jail staff, Emergency Department members, local crisis workers and our Health and Human Services Department. The goal was clear; keep vulnerable populations out of the jail.

What I have learned over the last 10 years is that the system has failed these populations in one key arena; inmate health care coverage. An individual, who is eligible for OHA coverage when outside the facility, now becomes ineligible because of Federal prohibition. My local HHS can't even provide basic mental health crisis work to previously eligible citizens while confined to the Yamhill County Jail. The cost to provide such treatment and service now becomes the burden of the Sheriff's Office and is a burden to their budget.

I met with Representative Jim Weidner's staff months ago to discuss this very issue. This problem affects every County Jail and depending on the size of facility and County, is handled differently. For my County, I continue to pay my local HHS each year for crisis work and counseling within our jail. The same service they provide to their individuals when they are not in custody, costs me thousands each year.

I am here today to ask for your support of this measure. By creating a task force to look at this statewide issue and to develop some recommendations for solutions will only benefit the vulnerable population throughout that state and will provide some much needed relief to County Sheriff's Office budgets. Remember, these inmates are pre-trial and have not been convicted of any crimes. They deserve the same coverage they had prior to coming into our facility.

Thank you for your consideration of this measure. The OSSA and OACP are committed to continuing our work in combination with other stakeholders to address this important issue.



Sheriff Tim Svenson, Yamhill County Sheriff

On behalf of the Oregon State Sheriffs' Association and the Oregon Association Chiefs of Police

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