

ROBIN SELLS  
CHIEF OF POLICE

## GRESHAM POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Senator Sara Gelser, Chair  
Senate Committee on Human Services

Chair Gelser and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony on behalf of the City of Gresham's top legislative priority, SB 140, which provides funding for the East Metro Gang Enforcement Team (EMGET). As Police Chief, I can definitively say that this funding is vital to our gang enforcement efforts, and that without this funding, we would not be able to deploy a coordinated, thorough, and cooperative multi-jurisdictional approach to gang issues. Allowing these issues to fester without the intervention provided by EMGET would have substantial regional and statewide implications, as gang members operate through networks up and down major transportation corridors, across state lines, and even internationally in some cases.

EMGET was formed in 2005, and provides a collaborative, multi-agency approach to the rise of acute gang issues in our area. Rapid redevelopment in inner-Portland has substantially increased land values and rental rates in the urban core, meaning that poverty and criminal justice issues have been on a steady march to Gresham and East Multnomah County for several years.

The seven-member team represents a partnership between the cities of Gresham, Troutdale, Fairview, Wood Village, and the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office. The seamless integration of these agencies, from a law enforcement perspective, ensures that we remain a step ahead of gang activity, and that our knowledge and experience with gangs in our area is not lost at any municipal boundary.

In the most recent year of data available (2016), EMGET made 224 felony arrests, seized 61 weapons, and had 492 contacts with suspected gang members. There is no way that our regular patrol function alone could operate in the gang enforcement arena with this type of success. The return on investment we collectively receive as a result of the Legislature's partnership is a game-changer for our community, and has regional and statewide benefits.

Gang crimes constitute some of the most heinous, complex, persistent, and difficult cases I have encountered in my entire law enforcement career. These cases often include hardened criminals operating as part of an organized network, in an environment where both victims and witnesses are disinclined to assist law enforcement. But for the knowledge, contacts, and relationships we have built through the East Metro Gang Enforcement team, far too many violent crimes, felonies, and high-level narcotics cases would go unsolved, heavily impacting the safety and livability of the residents we serve.

As Police Chief, I am grateful for the partnership this dynamic team represents, and extremely appreciative of the Legislature's recognition that these issues cannot be solved by local government alone. We strongly urge your support of SB 140.

Sincerely,

*RS - Sells*

**Robin Sells  
Chief of Police**