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Oregon State Sheriffs' Association

Conservators of the Peace

Criminal Justice Commission Budget Testimony

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Chair Winters, Chair Stark, members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety. For the record, my name is Jason Myers. I am the Marion County Sheriff and I'm here representing the Oregon State Sheriffs' Association, in support of the Criminal Justice Commission's budget.

The Criminal Justice Commission, under the leadership of Michael Schmidt, has done a remarkable job of administering and monitoring the Justice Reinvestment grants to local communities over the past two biennia. These grants have led to an array of statewide innovative programs that have lowered prison admissions and enhanced public safety in nearly every county across the state. The CJC has estimated DOC operational costs savings to be 52.7 million for the upcoming biennium and this estimate doesn't include the cost of a new prison that would have been built had House Bill 3194 not been passed.

The funding of Justice Reinvestment is very important to our local communities and state as a whole. In my experience as a Sheriff and working with other stakeholders groups I've not seen initiative quite like this one. It has brought Sheriffs, Chiefs, District Attorneys, Legislators, County Commissioners, Community Corrections Directors, Judges, Victim Advocacy groups, the defense bar, small businesses, non-profit organizations together to focus on objectives of lowering the use of prisons and enhancing public safety outcomes through local, innovative programs. In Marion County, this has been done through programs such as the SB416 prison diversion program, our Student Opportunity for Achieving Results (prison re-entry program) and our Jail Re-entry program. The results of these programs and efforts have been impressive in terms of our County's reduced prison usage and successful outcomes.

The Sheriffs' Association recognizes that the State has a lot of challenges this session. The message I want to leave you with is, Justice Reinvestment funding through the Criminal Justice Commission is vital to our local communities, and I suggest the amount funded should be equal to the savings realized as a result of the positive work of Justice Reinvestment programs. Sheriffs have embraced Justice Reinvestment and demonstrated commitment to the programs that have been collaboratively and innovatively designed to improve community safety while supporting successful offender reentry. Any reductions to Justice Reinvestment funding would put these successful initiatives at risk.