

Department of Community Justice



TO: Chairs Prozanski and Williamson and members of the Senate and House Judiciary

DATE: September 18, 2019

RE: Testimony on SB 5504, Department of Corrections Budget

Chairs Prozanski and Williamson and members of the Committee, I am Erika Preuitt, Director of Multnomah County Department of Community Justice (DCJ). The Department of Community Justice is responsible for Adult Probation and Post-Prison Supervision and Juvenile Probation, among other services.

I am here today to provide an overview of the impacts of the Community Corrections budget adopted by the Legislature. I want to express how much we appreciate the opportunity to testify today to outline how the current allocation is affecting Multnomah County.

Previous testimony outlined why there was a funding gap. I want to spend the next few minutes outlining our reductions based on the adopted budget and what impacts this will have on public safety in Multnomah County.

We had to propose a countywide reduction to our FY 2020 budget by \$5.4 million dollars as a result of the funding levels approved by the Oregon Legislature for the Community Corrections budget. These reductions include programs and services in both the Department of Community Justice which provides community supervision and the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office which operates our jail.

Department of Community Justice reductions included a total of 19 full time employees (FTE) and the closure of a cognitive therapy intervention program that worked with our justice involved individuals to change their behavior. This program had been a resource for our probation and parole officers for over 25 years and it's closure impacts the range of services available to the individuals we supervise. In addition, we are eliminating four Probation and Parole Officer positions, which will increase caseload sizes. While our funded population has been decreasing over the last several years and we have been adjusting staffing levels to align to these numbers, eliminating these 4 positions will impact caseload sizes of our PPOs.

Our partners at the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office are planning to close a 73 bed jail bed dorm on March 1st. This is a 6% reduction in jail capacity and means the elimination of 7.2 FTE corrections officers. This reduces Multnomah County's jail capacity to dramatically low levels for a jurisdiction of this size.

Our model in Multnomah County is built to address the root causes and risks of individuals committing new crimes and their specific needs that contribute to criminal behavior. DCJ focuses on the highest

risk individuals and we base our case management model on evidence-based practices. We emphasize approaches that address behavior change and promote community reintegration. Currently, 53% of those being supervised are considered high risk and by focusing on them we are able to have a lower recidivism rate than the state average, and one of the lowest for high-risk individuals.

While these cuts are devastating to our County, we are committed to remain creative and collaborative as we work with our criminal justice partners to maximize our impact within these constraints. We will continue to be a committed partner and leader in the effort to reform the criminal justice system through the active involvement in the Multnomah County Justice Reinvestment Program (MCJRP) and the MacArthur Foundation's Safety and Justice Challenge. These efforts have contributed to the decreased reliance on costly resources such as jail and prison beds and instead focused time and money on identifying the key risks and needs of these justice-involved individuals and developing a case plan to address those needs. We will also remain committed to reducing racial and ethnic disparities and continue to invest to expand culturally responsive programming such as the Habilitation, Empowerment, Accountability Therapy (HEAT) curriculum, a culturally specific approach to addressing low engagement rates among high risk/high need African American justice involved individuals.

However, due to the existing funding gap, our success is being threatened. The most recent time study took into account the time and money it takes to deliver a successful evidence based community supervision program. The reductions we have had to take are eroding the services available to individuals we supervise as well as the time our officers have to spend to create case plans and connect these individuals to services. This will impact our recidivism rates as well as our prison usage. In addition, the Community Corrections funding is the foundation to all the reform work we do. We leverage this funding to fully fund our state justice reinvestment work through our MCJRP program. These reductions impact the range of services such as housing and treatment that are available for MCJRP participants.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Submitted by:

Erika Preuitt, Director
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