



March 13, 2019

Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services
Senator Lee Beyer, Co-Chair
Representative Rob Nosse, Co-Chair

RE: SB 5525, Behavioral Health System Priorities

Dear Co-Chairs Beyer and Nosse and Members of the Committee,

I am the Director of Lane County Health & Human Services and the Mental Health Director for Lane County, and am writing today to recommend budget priorities for improving the behavioral health system across Oregon, particularly in light of the critical role of the behavioral health system in improving outcomes in the housing and public safety systems. These challenges are complex in communities across the state, and the behavioral health system is a critical player in helping to braid resources and systems in local communities to achieve real solutions.

Today I will focus on just a few examples to highlight opportunities that align with maintaining a strong system as well as with specific POPs.

The first example I would offer is Lane County's Frequent User System Engagement (FUSE) model, based on a national model to use local data to identify a specific target population of high-cost, high-need individuals who are shared clients of jails, mental health crisis systems, and emergency departments. We brought together leaders from our behavioral health system, public safety system, health care system, and homelessness system in a collective effort to find these individuals and then shift them away from costly crisis services to more cost-effective and humane solutions—permanent supportive housing and supportive services. This is a housing first model, and our first year pilot results for this group were significant—in the first year we reduced arrests by Eugene Police by 82%, emergency department utilization by 26%, and overall healthcare costs to Medicaid by 53%. In Lane County, the behavioral health system is critical in making these solutions work, providing the supportive services that make Permanent Supportive Housing work, and we need more of these services.

Another important area of focus is with the Aid and Assist population. In September of last year, the Emergency Board allocated \$1.5M to three counties to immediately address the need for community restoration capacity in order to decrease the number of people sent to the State Hospital. In Lane County, we meet monthly as a Mental Health Summit including law enforcement, courts, hospitals, and behavioral health providers to identify challenges and develop solutions. We heard clearly from our judges and public safety partners that a key barrier preventing them from choosing community restoration was the lack of available housing and services for the Aid and Assist population. In response, with these additional funds we are working with the OHA to lease space in empty cottages on the Junction City campus to provide secure residential treatment services for this population. Additionally, we are expanding access

access to local evaluators, and providing increased case management services to help connect these individuals with services and the courts. And, we are on-track to reduce our Aid and Assist population being sent to OSH.

We know that investments in community settings that provide the appropriate level of care are more cost effective and pave the way for greater savings and a more effective system in the long run. The investments proposed in POP 410 are necessary to effectively address the Aid & Assist issue and avoid the opening of a new wing at Junction City Hospital which would result in an even greater ongoing cost to the state.

And, we know that investing in the behavioral health system is a key part of solving these and other complex problems in communities across the state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen Gaffney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping flourish at the end.

Karen Gaffney
Director
Lane County Health & Human Services