

December 10, 2021

Senator Lee Beyer, Co-Chair
Representative Julie Fahey, Co-Chair
Joint Interim Committee on the Second Special Session of 2021
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chair Beyer, Co-Chair Fahey and Members of the Committee,

The City of Gresham emphatically supports \$2 million to implement the East Metro Outreach, Prevention, and Intervention (OPI) program. There is consensus among local leaders, service providers, and communities of color that investments must be made to prevent increasing violence in our community, and that these services should be directly provided by culturally-responsive partners.

As one of the most diverse communities in Oregon with a youth population of 29,000, the City of Gresham is committed to increased investment for youth and families. That is why the Gresham City Council adopted the OPI program as a key legislative priority. State funding for this program will help provide youth engagement and mentoring services for the area’s most vulnerable residents. These services will be aimed at decreasing youth violence, building community, and demonstrating that investments in mentoring and culturally-responsive programs can improve public safety outcomes and meaningfully impact the quality of life of Oregonians in need.

Gresham’s existing challenges with gun violence have been exacerbated this year. Residents in Gresham have also been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. One zip code—97233—has nearly 9% of the total COVID-19 cases in Multnomah County and is also one of the most diverse in the state, with more than 54% percent identifying as Black, Indigenous and Persons of Color. The worsening systemic inequities and increased isolation brought by the pandemic has led to a dramatic increase in gun violence in our communities.

The City of Gresham humbly requests the support and partnership of the State to address this crisis. We understand that the Youth Development Division of the Oregon Department of Education (YDD) has stated the program is an appropriate fit for its work, and we welcome YDD’s expertise to support implementation and evaluation of the OPI program to help ensure that it provides an evidence-based solution to the challenges our City faces.

We are committed to creating communities where our children feel safe and are afforded every opportunity to be successful in their lives. The East Metro OPI Program is a vital component of the City’s efforts to build an inclusive system that provide the mentoring, health, educational, and workforce opportunities that are so desperately needed in East Multnomah County. By partnering with the State, the City of Gresham sees a real opportunity to make a difference in children’s lives and combat the epidemic of gun violence in East Multnomah County. Thank you for your consideration of this essential funding request.

Sincerely,
Brian Monberg
Government Relations Manager