



NORTHWEST HEALTH
FOUNDATION

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. For the record, my name is David Navarro, and I use he/him pronouns.

I am a Program Officer at Northwest Health Foundation, now eight weeks into my new role and new to Portland after spending these past years living and working within rural Oregon to improve community access to essential services, with an emphasis on housing and ending homelessness throughout our state's most rural counties.

Northwest Health Foundation began as the Physicians Association of Clackamas County in 1938—the nation's first prepaid health plan or HMO—serving timber workers in Clackamas County and eventually expanding to serve all of Oregon. It is a history and a commitment to serving Oregon that we maintain today. We sold our HMO in 1997, creating our endowment from which we do grantmaking, granting more than 100 million dollars to more than 1,300 grantees, covering every Oregon county.

From our founding board chair, Senator Mark Hatfield, to our current board chair Cyreena Boston Ashby, Northwest Health Foundation's commitment to advancing health for everyone in Oregon has been steadfast. Since our first grants in 1997, we've seen healthcare access expand to ensure nearly everyone in Oregon has the health insurance and the care they deserve. And we've also seen the health of Oregonians worsen.

Our foundation had to grapple with what the data showed—that we live in a country and a state where too often, your chance for a healthy, stable life is determined more by your race, gender, and other factors beyond your control than how hard you work or how often you see your doctor. This has led to fifteen years of supporting organizations to end racial and other disparities in various areas, like education, housing, employment, and investing in upstream public safety interventions.

We invest more than 75% of our grant dollars in organizations that have proven to be culturally responsive or culturally specific. And these organizations serve all Oregonians. With this strong track record of community-based grantmaking, we are both honored and well-positioned to design and implement the Justice Reinvestment Equity Program (JREP).

JREP envisions and strives for a community-directed public safety system that uplifts belonging, healing, individual and family stability, and support networks to prevent and reduce imprisonment and recidivism and end racial disparities in Oregon's criminal justice system.

The need for JREP is clear. Black, Indigenous, Latine, and other people of color are overrepresented in state prisons, according to The Sentencing Project's 2021 report on Racial and Ethnic Disparities in State Prisons. The same report illustrates that Oregon has the eighth highest rate of Black incarceration in the country. 2019's House Bill 3064 Report found that culturally specific organizations received no funding from the counties that received JRI resources.

Given this, we know that the ecosystem for culturally-specific organizations and culturally-responsive services is nascent. We know it will take time to build this capacity to serve Oregon's urban, suburban, and rural communities.

When we come back to you all with our initial report in January of 2024, it will have been 12 months of grantmaking. We know we will have successes, but we know from experience that disparities take a long time to close. We are engaging various community leaders and subject matter experts with differing points of view, using their input to shape the program overall.

Here's what we know so far about how JREP will work: We have developed a strengths-based approach to grantmaking, which considers those historically underfunded and where the greatest needs exist. We will provide culturally responsive technical assistance for grantees to simplify processes, prepare and analyze data, and support and train staff to ensure unified and timely reporting to strengthen organizations and the field.

We will evaluate programs, practices, and interventions that can help determine what is working well, what can be improved, and what the impact will be on the communities served. This Fall, we will release the JREP program announcement and invite groups to join the Justice Reinvestment Equity Program's Learning Community, where prospective grantees and interested parties will learn more about the program and provide feedback that will be used to finalize the program structure.

We are also working closely with the Criminal Justice Commission, their evaluator and researchers, and stakeholder groups to support the development of an evaluation approach that will meet the purpose and goals of JREP.

We look forward to continued work with our partners and returning to you with an update on JREP's implementation, what we've learned, and how communities have been impacted.