



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 Crystal Watson. I am the Director of Operations for the Latino Coalition for Community Leadership, the identified technical assistance provider under the Northwest Health Foundation for the JREP project. I have worked in nonprofit organizational management for over 18 years and have been providing capacity building services to grassroots and nonprofit organizations for 10 years.

The Latino Coalition for Community Leadership has worked directly with marginalized communities throughout the United States for over 19 years. We were formed in 2003 as an intermediary specifically focused on Finding, Funding, Forming and Featuring grassroots organizations in marginalized communities meeting the needs of individuals and families. By strengthening organizations in these communities, we help grow and sustain vital program opportunities and community leadership. Since our inception, our organization has accessed more than \$104 million to organizations experiencing the greatest disparities in social determinants of health, while also struggling to access the resources intended to address the very social disadvantages they face. In addition, our organization has provided capacity building and technical assistance to community and faith-based organizations while driving resources deep into the communities we serve. Our organization works not to lower the bar for these organizations, but to instead, raise the collective platform by providing capacity building and technical assistance in program development, data collection, organizational growth, and fiscal management and administration. This year, our organization is contracted to provide capacity building, training, and technical assistance to 74 nonprofit projects in California, Colorado, and Oregon. To date, we have served 178 organizations throughout the United States.

In 2014, Colorado passed community reinvestment legislation that redirected funding from the Department of Corrections' budget to provide grants to community-based organizations providing reentry services. Previously, reentry services were community-isolated, with the Department not effectively accessing or leveraging services already provided by the community. This legislation initially funded 5 community grants and today funds 23 projects throughout the State, with our organization contracted as the Intermediary, providing capacity-building over these 8 years. To date, this community reinvestment initiative has served almost 9,000

individuals providing them with stabilization services, housing, education, occupational skills training, and employment placement. Two evaluations, one in 2017 and one in 2022, have demonstrated that our program participants have a statistically significant reduction in recidivism. Perhaps more importantly is the organizational growth we have witnessed as a result of our efforts. Small, nascent nonprofits in 2014, made up of leadership and staff with lived experience, who come from the same communities as their participants, where the Department of Corrections reentry funding was their largest or only funder, have grown into robust organizations with developed financial acumen, employ dozens of staff, are licensed by the State to provide housing or substance use disorder treatment, and provide a range of services in their communities.

In 2018, a report was published in Colorado illustrating that the majority of victims of violent crime over the past five years were disproportionately non-white and yet there were major gaps in victims' access to treatment and services, especially among young adults, men, and Black victims. This led to legislation creating a community reinvestment initiative that focused on providing funding to community organizations targeting services to those disproportionately affected by crime yet historically not accessing treatment or services. An evaluation of victim services found that in 2019, Latinos were 38% more likely and African Americans were 34% more likely, relative to Caucasians, to report having been a victim of a violent crime. Yet, only one in 10 victims surveyed received victims' services. In comparison, the Colorado Crime Victim Services project created by the community reinvestment legislation, funds nonprofit organizations where the overwhelming majority of the staff, and 100% of the Executive Directors, of the programs funded are people of color. In this project, more than 90% of the victims served by C CVS are in the target population. In addition, in less than four years of capacity-building, most of the direct service organizations are able to access and manage federal funding such as Victim of Crime Act grants, or have expanded services, such as operating safe housing for domestic violence victims.

Too often we have witnessed instances where larger nonprofit organizations with the best grant writers are awarded funding to serve communities where they are not located, expecting instead that individuals will travel by public transit across town or county to seek services. Because the organization is not from that community, there is a significant learning curve to effective service delivery or responsiveness to need, and sadly, many times the services are not sustained after the initial funding ends. By providing culturally-specific investments as a public safety strategy, we are ensuring that the communities most impacted by victimization and the criminal justice system are the ones resourced to be the solution. And by providing capacity-building and support, we are ensuring that these initial investments can be leveraged, sustained, and expanded over time.

Finally, I would like to share a quick success story that illustrates the effectiveness of providing technical assistance to culturally-specific organizations. Second Chance Center started as one

man providing prison inreach and reentry services from his car. With the initial grant, he hired 2 staff and between the three of them, they had served over 76 years in prison. For two years, they operated under a fiscal sponsor, renting office space under that organization before they began managing grant funding on their own. Our organization has provided wrap-around capacity-building since their inception 10 years ago, providing thought partnership through their organizational growth. Today, they have two centers, operate a 200-bed residence, and the community reinvestment initiative funding makes up only 17% of their organizational budget.

We have appreciated working with the Northwest Health Foundation under the JREP initiative and thank the committee for hearing our testimony today.