

TO: Co-Chairs Gorsek, Sollman, and members of the Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Subcommittee On Public Safety

DATE: March 10, 2021

RE: Testimony on SB 5004, Department of Corrections Budget

Co-Chairs Gorsek, Sollman, and members of the Committee, I am Erika Preuitt, Director of Multnomah County Department of Community Justice (DCJ). DCJ is responsible for Adult Probation and Post-Prison Supervision and Juvenile Probation, among other services. Our goal is to help justice-involved individuals reenter their communities and have the services they need to stay there productively and safely.

Like the other 35 Counties, we are committed to delivering supervision and services based in evidence based practices that address the needs in our specific communities. In Multnomah County this means supervising individuals with gang involvement, opioid addiction, or homelessness. In addition, 52% of adults supervised in Multnomah County are high risk, which requires more time and money to successfully supervise.

Research and experience has shown us what works in community corrections. Our work focuses on the three "S's": supervision, services, and sanctions. National evidence-based practices regarding these three core principles has been in practice in our state since 2003. We focus on developing individualized case plans, identifying services and treatment that correlates to criminogenic risk and needs, and addressing behavioral violations with sanctions and interventions proven to change behavior.

To do this effectively, Multnomah County works hard to maintain manageable caseload sizes. This allows our parole and probation officers to develop relationships and have the time to serve in a coaching role to help justice-involved individuals navigate systems many are not familiar with. They are able to develop a rapport, which allows them to hold justice-involved individuals accountable as well as encourage growth and change. At Multnomah County we are committed to addressing the specific needs of the individuals under supervision by investing in both culturally responsive and gender specific services. We address behavior violations with an awareness that jail use should be reserved only for those individuals that pose an immediate public safety threat.

However, in order to provide this level of service, adequate and consistent funding is needed. As Jeremiah Stromberg, Assistant Director with DOC, outlined in his testimony earlier this week the cost of doing our work has not kept pace with funding levels provided by the Legislature. This has had a negative impact on the depth and breadth of services that are accessible to those on our caseloads. As a result, of budget shortfalls in Multnomah County we have had to eliminate internal programs aimed at providing educational and cognitive behavioral support. We support the request by the Oregon Association of Community Corrections Directors to provide \$25.6 million to our baseline budget to account for the rising personnel and service costs. Providing this funding would allow us to restore positions and services we eliminated in 2019 to adjust to this funding gap. Most importantly, it will help maintain current caseload sizes and provide needed services like cognitive behavioral therapy intervention, skill building, and housing supports.

Regardless of funding level, we will continue to invest in programs that work. With a need and commitment to address racial and ethnic disparities that plague our system, we have been able to invest in culturally specific programming. For example, we continue to grow our Habilitation Empowerment Accountability Therapy (HEAT) program, a curriculum for African American men ages 18 to 29 who are involved in the criminal justice system.

While the number of people being supervised has gone down and will continue to decrease with the passage of Measure 110, the needs of those on supervision remains high. Our agencies continue to need resources like staff and services, especially as our focus on the high risk continues. For those people coming out of prison or being placed on probation, our agencies serve as a bridge back to their community. We strive to stabilize and identify their needs quickly and connect them to the services and resources they need.

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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