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POIC Rosemary Anderson High School  
717 N. Killingsworth Court, Portland, OR 97217

April 14, 2021

Senator Betsy Johnson, Co-Chair  
Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair  
Representative Dan Rayfield, Co-Chair  
Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Co-Chair Johnson, Co-Chair Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair Rayfield and Members of the Committee,

I'm writing to support the City of Gresham's request to implement outreach, violence prevention and intervention services for the Gresham community. As the President and CEO of Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center, I see firsthand the challenges our youth and families face. Longstanding systemic barriers coupled with the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have negatively affected the physical, social, and economic wellbeing of our clients. Propelled by these difficult realities, and with added urgency as the incidence of violence in Gresham rises, we must act.

Building relationships, providing healthy and safe alternatives to violence, and intervening with the resources families need – this is what works. I have seen it firsthand through the programs we offer at POIC. With a right-sized investment, and with the City of Gresham filling the critical role of a convener, this new approach will allow POIC and other culturally specific organizations to meet the needs of Gresham's residents collaboratively, comprehensively, and effectively. This program will change lives.

This is an opportunity for the Oregon Legislative Assembly to demonstrate the effectiveness of investing upstream in social services, youth programs, and education as a way to both improve public safety outcomes and meaningfully impact the quality of life of Oregonians in need. Despite the significant challenges they confront daily, or perhaps because of them, Gresham's youth have incredible heart, vitality, ambition, strength, and talent. They deserve the opportunity to thrive. Thank you for considering this critical funding request.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  
  
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Joe McFerrin  
President & CEO