

February 19, 2021

House Behavioral Health Committee
900 Court St. NE, Rm. 453
State Capitol
Salem, OR, 97301

Dear Members of the House Behavioral Health Committee,

As people of faith and concerned community members, we urge you to vote YES on HB 2417, a bill that will provide \$10 million in state matching grants to support the development of mobile crisis intervention programs, based on the CAHOOTS model pioneered in Eugene. Mobile crisis intervention teams, as defined in the bill, provide trauma-informed de-escalation and harm reduction techniques to more appropriately respond to the related crises of untreated mental illness, substance abuse and homelessness that impact all of us here in the Rogue Valley.

Experience has shown that law enforcement does not always provide – nor are they trained or equipped to provide -- the most appropriate first response for every situation or individual in crisis. This bill would fund --and thus incentivize-- our cities and counties to implement a proven-effective and less costly alternative.

Our church, located in downtown Ashland, has had many years of direct experiences in situations where a mobile crisis team would have been more appropriate, humane, and effective than calling the police. Homeless, mentally ill, or substance-dependent persons can regularly be found sleeping or resting on the grounds of our church or in the surrounding area. They are frequently in distress. In these situations, a mobile team response can reduce arrests, de-escalate crises and appropriately connect these community members to social services.

Thank you for your attention and leadership on this important bill.
Sincerely,

Laurie True and Joseph Fichter
Co-Leaders, Witness & Justice Team
Ashland United Church of Christ
717 Siskiyou Boulevard, Ashland OR