

I am writing today to share my support for HB 2417. As a resident of Jackson County, we desperately need this type of program to deal with increasing needs for crisis intervention on our streets. Police aren't always the most appropriate first responders. Having a mobile crisis team would provide on-site crisis de-escalation and connect people to services in non criminal cases involving homelessness, substance abuse and mental illness. I have personally witnessed far too many times when police arrive on the scene to deal with a mental health crisis. Living with a neighbor who experiences severe mental health issues, the police are often called to address his anti-social behavior. He is not a risk to the public, yet heavily armed police arrive to deal with the situation. I consider it very lucky that the situations have never escalated to a point of danger for him or the community.

Crisis intervention is more effective and less costly than law enforcement response or incarceration. The CAHOOTS program in Lane County operates on \$2.1 million annual budget while the combined annual budgets for the Eugene and Springfield police departments are \$90 million. In 2019, the CAHOOTS teams answered 18% of the Eugene Police Department's overall call volume. The program saves the city of Eugene an estimated \$8.5 in public safety spending annually. With our local cities and county government spending reaching unsustainable levels, this kind of savings is critical for our communities in Jackson County.

Local cities have already expressed support for a Jackson County crisis team and that's the first step! A broad coalition of citizens have organized to support our cities and county governments to support this kind of program in our communities. People from across the political and professional spectrum all agree that this is the kind of real solution we need to address the increasing need for a non-punitive crisis intervention model.

A mobile crisis response team could help Jackson County further build necessary outpatient mental health services bringing costs down on local emergency services, adding jobs to Jackson County for mental health providers and helping neighbors with disabilities return to the work or volunteer force here.

I urge you all to pass HB 2417 and help bring this kind of compassionate response to our communities. We need these kinds of programs in our communities here in Jackson County. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Stuart O'Neill
Ashland, OR