



**PARTNERSHIP FOR
SAFETY & JUSTICE**

**Submitted to the House Committee on Behavioral Health
February 24, 2021**

**Testimony in Support of HB 2417
By Shannon Wight, Deputy Director, Partnership for Safety & Justice**

Chair Sanchez, Vice-Chairs Moore-Green and Nosse, and Members of the Committee,

At Partnership for Safety & Justice, we advocate for public safety and criminal justice policies that ensure accountability, equity, and healing for people convicted of crime, crime survivors, and the families and communities of both. For over 20 years, our work has promoted public safety with policies that keep families together, reduce racial disparities, and invest in communities across Oregon.

Partnership for Safety and Justice supports HB 2417 and its investment in alternative responses to behavioral health crises.

Starting in the 1960, Oregon along with the rest of the country, moved to deinstitutionalize people with mental illnesses. The goal was to invest in smaller, more community-based housing and treatment options. Those investments never materialized at the scale they were needed. The failure to provide treatment and stable housing placed the job of managing mental health crises at the feet of police without the tools, training or skills to do this work. Our prisons and jails are now disproportionately filled with people with mental illnesses.

The CAHOOTS model out of Eugene, around for 30 years, is now being uplifted in the wake of George Floyd's murder as one way to reimagine community safety.

As an organization committed to shrinking the correctional systems and reinvesting in community, we believe the investments in HB 2417 will help move us away from mass criminalization and mass incarceration particularly of Black people, Indigenous people, and other people of color. HB 2417 is one of many bills to address much needed changes to the criminal justice system. In conjunction HB 2002, which limits an officer's ability to arrest people for certain low level crimes, it could transform the way we conceive of public safety in Oregon.

PSJ supports HB 2417 and hopes it is just the beginning of many innovations that will save money and save lives.