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Behavioral Health Committee  
900 Court St NE  
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February 24, 2021

Honorable Committee Members:

I am Alison Duren-Sutherland, Jackson County resident and an Aspirant to the Unitarian Universalist ministry, currently serving three UU congregations in Southern Oregon as intern minister, but submitting this testimony today on my own behalf. Justice, equity & compassion in human relations is the second of our seven Unitarian Universalist principles, and I believe that shifting crisis response away from police and toward specifically trained, unarmed crisis responders is a step toward seeing this principle manifest in Oregon and the world. Several local jurisdictions are working on developing these programs, and HB 2417 is a necessary step for our rural communities to achieve this goal.

The only times I've ever called the police, what I really needed were crisis responders. I managed a business before answering the call to ministry, and we had an elderly client in our facility having a mental health emergency. I called around for quite some time trying to find crisis responders, but was told that my only options was to call the police. When they arrived, the individual in crisis became violent and was arrested. This was the last thing this person needed, and there was nothing just, compassionate or equitable in this situation.

Finally, there is racial bias in policing whether officers intend it or not. Recent Community Policing Forums here in Southern Oregon have included harrowing stories of what black and brown folks have experienced in our communities when interacting with police. Let's create a new system that takes police out of the crisis response business and hands that important work to folks who are unarmed and are trained specifically for those tasks. Please ensure that HB2417 becomes law.

Sincerely,  
Alison Duren-Sutherland