

Chair and Members,

I am providing testimony as a long-time mental health counselor, a former Director of Counseling at Southern Oregon University, a school board member, an educator, a parent, and a community member.

Try as law enforcement might, I have for too long seen the negative consequences of police being the primary responders for a mental health crisis. Despite most law enforcement officers completing some crisis intervention training, they are not the best people to be responding to a person in crisis. We have trained professionals who can do this work. It is unnecessary and harmful to continue these practices and municipalities and counties need further incentives from the state to being to build mobile crisis intervention capacity. Here in Southern Oregon/Jackson County we are trying to bring a CAHOOTS-like model to our region.

Financial support from the state would go a long ways to bringing about this cost-effective, life-saving, humanitarian, and social justice-minded resource to folks in distress.

Thank you.

Victor Chang, PhD LPC