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Oregon Faith Movement

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

Working with over 150 congregations, organizations, and interfaith partners, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) strives to envision communities of faith in ministry together creating a more peaceful, just, sustainable, and compassionate world.

EMO strongly supports HB 2417. This bill provides alternative responses to behavioral health crises, aligning with our beliefs to cultivate a safer and more equitable community that provides people with sufficient mental health services.

EMO is dedicated to working with fellow Oregonians to reimagine what community safety can look like. The Crisis Assistance Helping out on the Streets (CAHOOTS) model is one way that we can do this. Providing people experiencing mental health crises with trained and skilled responders that can de-escalate the situation without causing more harm is a resource that the community has been demanding. Further, the CAHOOTS program continues to decriminalize mental health and provide people with the services that they need rather than turning to incarceration as a solution.

Seeing the success from the White Bird Clinic in Eugene and Springfield, it is clear that there are responses to public safety that do not include the police. In the midst of a behavioral health crisis it's vital that we take steps to ensure that a call for help does not mean a violent confrontation, but rather that people are met with trained and experienced professionals who can provide them with the support they may need. Nationwide, there is a lack of investment in mental health resources. It's essential that Oregon take steps to provide our communities with the services that they need to stay safe.

We urge you to support HB 2417 and join us in serving and investing in the safety and well-being of our communities. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Ella Burke
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon